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On Behalf Of: Mark Gibbs ER RN
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4142

To Whom it may concern-

I fully support the efforts to make it a felony for assault against a healthcare worker, especially while in the course of performing their work. I have worked in healthcare for almost 30 years, for the past 10 years as a staff nurse in the emergency department. During this time I have seen an ongoing deterioration in the treatment of healthcare providers by some members of the public. I have limited specific stories about violence against me personally, partially because I have become more attuned to when I believe violence will occur and I take extensive steps to proactively diffuse these situations, sometimes utilizing tools that not all healthcare providers may have available - i.e. extensive security backup during periods of concern.

During my time working in the emergency department I have been bitten, hit, kicked, verbally abused, and most severely assaulted with equipment in the patient room. My specific story involved a patient utilizing a piece of monitoring equipment to strike me resulting in injury. This was reported to the police and charges were filed, the prosecutor's office encouraged me not to pursue the case against the individual due to 1) lack of a significant anticipated outcome and 2) the patient was intoxicated during the event which the prosecutor thought would be a factor in the case IN FAVOR of the offending individual. This particular patient was known for repeated aggressive behavior against staff while intoxicated and then playing up his intoxication by pretending he couldn't walk (due to being overly intoxicated) when being evaluated for discharge from the department. This would occur after he was previously walking when yelling at staff and, in my case swinging equipment at me.

While I have become numb to much of this behavior over time, assaults on healthcare workers aren't acceptable if we expect others to keep doing this work. The example above is one example of behavior that we have tolerated for too long, we need stronger laws to protect healthcare workers who are simply trying to do their job. We wouldn't sign up for and remain in a job if it wasn't for our desire to help others.

Thank you for your consideration in helping to protect those who are simply trying to do their jobs.

Mark Gibbs