

Submitter: Agnes Gantz
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4088

I am an RN who has worked in an emergency department since 2007. In the last 17 years violence has been escalating exponentially from the streets of our city and moved into our hospitals. I began my career spending time with my patients, talking with them about their care, comforting their family members, and holding the hands of those left behind after tragic losses. Sadly, in the last 10 years I have been bitten and punched, had blood and other body fluids thrown at me, had chairs, stools, and 100 pound carts thrown at me, called horrible names, and had my life threatened, often on a daily basis. I had to ask security to escort me to my car for a three-week period when I was stalked by one of these patients after a shift. Although some would argue that these are mentally ill patients, this is often not the case. Most of these patients have the capacity to make decisions and are forward thinking. Patients threaten to come back and kill us and our families, and it scares us. Although I have been assaulted verbally and physically every shift, when I talked about filing charges, I am told "no one will do anything," "it doesn't matter," "no one cares about us," and am encouraged not to file. The times I have filed charges, no one from the DA's office called me back even though I called them multiple times for an update. I have represented the Emergency Nurse Association in Washington D.C. for four years as a government affairs committee member to advocate for help, hoping someone would care enough to partner with us on accountability for the public; I was so disappointed by the lack of support that I quit going. Violence in healthcare has been an epidemic in the past decade and it's not going to get any better until offenders are held accountable for their abuse toward us. I get it isn't simple, but we deserve parity. We are no less important or deserving of protection than EMS workers, fire, police, and even mail carriers who are all supported by the law in a way that we are not. I hope you are brave enough to do the right thing and support our safety from abusers because quite honestly, neither my fellow nurses nor myself can take it anymore. We are leaving healthcare to start new careers - even those who have only been in healthcare a few years are leaving. Why wouldn't we? I would welcome additional discussion if needed. Thank you for your time.