



February 18, 2025

Good morning Chair, Vicechair and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Ronda Martinez and I work at the Stabilization and Crisis Unit. I've worked at SACU for over 20 years. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story in support of SB 606. I started out at Fairview Training Center when I was 18. When I started with SACU the majority of our individuals were from Fairview. Over the years we have evolved from individuals that were close to being ready for community support with IDD to individuals that are dual diagnosed with mental health issues and no to slight IDD. The individuals have become more physically aggressive and dangerous.

Because the acuity levels have risen exponentially and we work in unsafe conditions, I've experienced both physical, mental, and emotional trauma. I have been stabbed at least 6 times with things ranging from a crayon to an ink pen. I have had an individual get their hand through the barrier of the vehicle and attempt to strangle me while I was driving. I have had my nose broken by an individual in the community. I have had an individual try to push me into traffic by a busy road. I have been bitten, coked, kicked, punched, and spit on. I had to intervene when an individual bit a chunk out of a coworker and spit the flesh and blood in our faces. I don't like crowds or crowded environments.

Many of these things that I have experienced at work have followed me home. I could be in my home, my safe place, with my favorite people, my young Grandbabies and an Amazon driver will back up or a car alarm will go off. I jump, start sweating, my heart will race, and I start to look frantically around. My grandbabies will then startle before they realize that grandma just had a jump scare. It's sad when a 4 year old has to reassure their grandma that everything is OK and they are safe. I'm lucky that they don't yet realize just how badly this affects me and think Meemaw just had a jump scare and kinda laugh it off.

My family knows not to walk up behind me. My son has told me that him just walking in a room, and me not expecting it, makes me jump. He has described that when I face him, he can tell that I am in fight or flight and he's right. It takes a few seconds to realize that I am not being



attacked and then minutes to calm myself. Until he mentioned it, I didn't realize that my family could tell that I was not ok. I can not be touched while I'm driving as it causes me to react like I'm being attacked. The store that my nose was broken in by an individual, I have been in only twice since. This incident was over 10 years ago. I used to frequent this store with my kids before this. I bled so profusely, from my nose being broken and the subsequent crisis in the store, that they had to remove the carpet and put in vinyl flooring. I have a visceral response when I have attempted to go in and just avoid it now. This is not normal behavior. I can't relax because I'm scanning for potential threats at all times. I suffer from chronic migraines, I have recurring bleeding Ulcers, and insomnia. These have all been connected to events that have happened at work.

My story isn't unique, I have seen numerous staff try to get PTSI accommodations and were denied. These staff all ended up resigning due to the extent of their trauma. For as long as I can remember while doing this job, we have been told by management and HR that, "all floor staff have PTSI to some extent, it's part of the job." Staff being traumatized is swept under the carpet. The individual that attacked you today, you are assigned to work with the next day. The only resources we are given is EAP. The EAP resource just tells you to reach out to your insurance to get a counselor. There is not any agency support.

Adding employees of SACU to the PTSI prescription like firefighters and other public safety workers, allows us to access mental health benefits which are highly needed in this workforce. I hope this committee is able to support this important piece of legislation so we can access resources to deal with our mental health injuries caused on the job.