

TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Chris Buesing, Director for Workers Compensation and Workforce Safety, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka, Kansas

DATE: January 23, 2023

RE: Proponent of House Bill 2023

My name is Chris Buesing and I am the Director for Workers Compensation and Workforce Safety for Stormont Vail Health. I am also the chairperson for Stormont Vail Health Workplace Violence Committee.

I want to start with a personal story. On January 17, 2017, I was walking through the hallway of the Kanza Orthopedic clinic when I was attacked. The attacker had been sitting on a bench in the hallway. He was not a patient but someone who had walked into the building. He punched me in the face breaking my jaw. My recovery was a very long journey that resulted in my jaw being wired shut initially for six weeks. Due to the extent of the injuries and the ongoing pain after my initial healing, my jaw needed to be re-broken and wired shut again for eight more weeks. I then needed two years of braces to continue the healing process on my jaw to try to get it back into alignment. The attack not only impacted me physically but it also had an emotional impact. During the months my jaw was wired shut, I experienced anxiety and depression. I found myself always on alert. It impacted my time with my wife and children. I had to step down from coaching my son's baseball team and teaching classes at work. The impact was difficult, but I was grateful for the support of Stormont throughout the entire process. I will never know why I was attacked, but the attack has had a lasting impact, that ultimately changed who I am.

When I was attacked, I was working as the Process Improvement Manager at Stormont. Two years after the attack, the position for Director for Worker Comp and Workforce Safety became available. My very personal experience with workplace violence led me to apply for the role. I felt my experience could help me to make a difference. I share this story as a healthcare worker that has experienced Workplace Violence (WPV). I use my story to help prepare others that work at Stormont to be vigilant and to make sure they know they are not alone. I share my story so we can learn and make the changes that are needed. I share my story with raw emotion so my peers know we will not accept these experiences as being ok or just part of the job.

My story is not unique. Stormont Vail Health experiences an average of 4 reported workplace violence incidents per month. That does not include the average of 10 calls to Security per week to ask for assistance due to some form of WPV. That also does not account for the over 50 notes per month placed into patient charts to alert staff to a history the patient has for becoming violent. Since my attack, Stormont has also experienced a nurse being attacked in the triage area of the Emergency Department, and a doctor that was attacked in a patient room. We are kicked, we are bitten, and we are yelled at on a regular basis. We are the professionals that experience these situation and turn around to go take care of the next patient. We are the professionals that have these experiences and then are required to take the aggressors back in for additional care.

Since my broken jaw, since the nurse that was attacked in the ED and since the doctor was attacked by his patient we are doing everything we can to protect ourselves. We have:

- created a workplace violence committee that meets monthly
- doubled our Security Officers
 - added metal detectors to the Emergency Department
- implemented an evidence based assessment to help identify patients that have a potential for violence
 - implemented mandatory de-escalation training for all employees
 - implemented workplace violence hazard assessments
 - created and installed posters that say we do not tolerate violence and harassment
- created response teams for patients that are becoming violent so we can provide the best level of care while still keeping staff safe
- created a response team to connect to employees who experienced WPV to support them
- we have just started a process to meet with all new employees in small groups to talk with them face to face about workplace violence. What WPV is and how Stormont will support them if it happens.

I took this role so I could do my best to prevent anybody else having to go through the experience that I did. All of the members of the Workplace Violence Committee volunteered to help implement change to protect our employees from workplace violence. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has created new rules for us to follow to keep healthcare workers safer so they are more willing to stay in the profession. I am here to ask for your help now. Help keep us safe so we can continue to take care of you, your family, your friends, your peers and even those that act violently towards us as we care for them. This is your chance to help us.

Thank you.