

Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Hayden, Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Marty Wilde, Representative from House District Eleven.

Health care practitioners provide vital services to our communities. They work tirelessly to protect us from disease, teach us how to remain healthy, and respond to emergencies. In turn, it is our responsibility to protect them from the risks they face in their line of work. Front line healthcare workers are especially likely to face risks in their job. One of these risks is accidental needle sticks.

When it comes to treating accidental needle sticks, every minute counts. Ideally, treatment should begin within the first thirty minutes and must begin within 72 hours. This treatment may include intensive antiretroviral medications to prevent infection. These medications come with serious side effects and should only be used if absolutely necessary. Ideally, a patient will consent to be tested so that the frontline healthcare worker can begin treatment if they need to.

Unfortunately, the patients being cared for when needle sticks occur are often unconscious and cannot consent to being tested. The healthcare provider must then petition the court for an expedited order to require testing. The process for getting these orders can take several days, in the meantime the healthcare worker is stuck between choosing to begin a potentially unnecessary intensive medical treatment or face serious health risks. This bill will eliminate that step and allow medical professionals to test patients who are unable to consent.

Our first responders are heroes. They put themselves in danger every day to protect us. We need to do what we can to make sure they aren't forced to take unnecessary risks. We need to pass Senate Bill 1027. Thank you for your time.