

Hello, members of the committee,

My name is Melissa Pfeleger, and I am an emergency department nurse writing in **support** of HB 4142. I have worked in this position for 12 years. Five years ago, I was punched in the face by a patient who was angry that the doctor took too long to see her for her minor laceration to a finger. I heard yelling and went into her room and asked what the problem was; she jumped off the bed immediately, and I attempted to block her arm from hitting me but was unable. She punched my right eye; my team immediately subdued her, took care of me, and called 911. We only had one security guard, one male doctor, one male nurse, and two female nurses; none trained to take down a violent patient! I did not provoke this attack. My injury was a broken bone in my eye orbit and a change to my vision in my right eye that is still not normal to this day. I was luckily able to return to my next scheduled shift with a black eye. Some health care workers have debilitating injuries or death. We do not have armed security, nor do they carry tasers or handcuffs. When violence occurs, our only choice is to fight or run for safety. I will always run for safety. Think about that if your family member is in the emergency department, I will do nothing to stop someone from harming them. I will only protect myself!

Public Defender- Rep. Baily and Rep. Lewis are concerned about mental/behavioral health patients' rights; what about my rights as someone who contributes to society and pays taxes? The emergency department is no place for those in mental health crises, so those clients need to be taken somewhere more appropriate and secure. We will never have the resources or training to manage them.

Patients who assault healthcare workers need to be held accountable for their behavior. I did press charges, and I was lucky that my offender spent over 80 days in the county jail. I felt it was important to file the paperwork and, with the help of the DA's office to prosecute my assailant to the fullest extent, but the "system" does not make that easy. I try now to keep a considerable distance between myself and patients acting angry or aggressive. I urge you all to support HB 4142

Melissa Pfeleger, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN