

March 19, 2025

TO: Senate Committee On Health Care

Testimony in Support of SB 537

FROM: Michele Vowell

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

I work a Legacy Unity Center for Behavioral Health in the Psychiatric Emergency. This past week we had a vulnerable patient, catatonic, sexually assaulted in our emergency PES. This is unacceptable. While there are regular instances of my co-workers getting punched, spit at, but this assault affects me to my core. Vulnerable patients should not be sexually assaulted in the ED. SB 537 offers low cost regulatory solutions to create meaningful review and oversight. Staff and union representatives should be able to review workplace violence reports and create solutions. Hospital administrations have not shown an ability to make changes in support of safety.

While changes have been made to Hospital staffing there seem to be loopholes in regard to the new psychiatric multidisciplinary Staffing committee. Thank you for accepting my testimony and I urge your support of SB 537. Unity staffing would benefit from looking at all disciplines together. We are confident in numbers of nurses but not techs, social workers, or Nurse Practitioners.