

HB2349

HD1 SD1



THE QUEEN'S MEDICAL CENTER

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Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Dwight Y. Takamine, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

March 23, 2010 – 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Re: HB 2349, HD1 SD1 – Relating to Violence Against Health Care Personnel

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Takamine and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cindy Kamikawa, Chief Nurse Executive for The Queen's Medical Center (Queen's) **testifying in strong support of HB 2349, HD1 SD1** which extends protection from assault and terroristic threatening to emergency room personnel.

The prevention of workplace violence has emerged as an important safety issue in hospitals. According to the Emergency Nurses Association and the American College for Emergency Physicians, occurrences in healthcare violence are on the rise, and hospital emergency rooms have become the most prevalent location for violence in a health care setting. Nationally, thousands of non-fatal assaults on hospital workers have occurred. Studies have shown that between 35% and 80% of hospital staff have been physically assaulted at least once and that nurses are at increased risk for violence while on duty.

The Legislature has extended protections similar to those sought in this measure to correctional, educational, and other service providers. Emergency room personnel are routinely exposed to unstable patients with drug or alcohol impairment, or suffering from psychiatric disorders. Verbal and physical threats to health care personnel extend into the waiting areas as well. The Queen's Medical Center Emergency Department is the largest and busiest Emergency Department in the State, with approximately 50,000 visits a year. This additional protection will ensure a safer environment for health care personnel and patients.

We urge you to pass this measure and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of
John M. Kirimitsu
Legal and Government Relations Consultant

Before:
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations
The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
The Honorable Dwight Y. Takamine, Vice Chair

March 23, 2010
9:30 am
Conference Room 016

Re: HB 2349, HD1, SD1 Relating to Violence Against Health Care Personnel

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Takamine, and committee members thank you for this opportunity to provide comments towards the decision making on this bill regarding violence against emergency medical personnel.

Kaiser Permanente supports this bill.

Kaiser Permanente supports this bill to protect emergency medical services personnel in the workplace by providing severe legal consequences against potential attackers for causing injuries to medical personnel.

Violence against healthcare personnel appears to be on the rise. According to a U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics, healthcare workers experience violent assaults at a rate four times higher than average, and it is even worse for emergency personnel at a rate of more than twelve times the national average.

By its very nature, the emergency department is a place of high stress for the patient and the emergency medical staff. Emergency department workers routinely find themselves at increased risk of violence due to the high volatility of the emergency patient population, with an increasing number of patients and visitors using drugs and alcohol, or having psychiatric disorders or dementia, that make them more prone to violence. The type of violence, ranging from verbal to violent physical attacks, is becoming all too common, which negatively impacts the emergency medical personnel by reinforcing a common misconception that this type of violence is just part of the job.

To help deter these violent and abusive acts against emergency medical personnel, legislation is needed to protect emergency medical providers from unnecessary violence, and afford them a safe haven to perform their job of providing quality care to the high risk emergency patient population.

Thank you for your consideration.