

January 10, 2023

Thank You Chairman Klemin and Judicial committee members for the work you are doing and allowing me to speak today. My name is Gail Pederson, District 24. I am here to speak in favor of House Bill 1121, relating to assault on a health care facility employee. I am a Special Practice RN, Board Certified Holistic Nurse and Cannabis Nurse educator and consultant. I was honored to be named North Dakota Legendary Nurse for Advocacy by the ND Center for Nursing in 2019.

My most recent “punch the clock” position, semi retiring after 42 years in August, was taking care of aging religious sisters at Maryvale convent near Valley City. The first time I drew all of the sisters’ blood for lab, I joked....Well, at least I know you aren’t drunk, I don’t think you’ll swear at me and I doubt you will take a swing at me....And we laughed. We laughed! This is nothing to laugh about.

I worked in a small town ER for 21 years. The installation of the “Panic Button” directly to 911 when the unit was remodeled many years ago ushered in a new reality. Fortunately, the only time I ever used it was when I accidentally leaned in to it. Our police officers can come fast, but not fast enough.

I am a member of the American Cannabis Nurses Association and on their Government Policy and Advocacy committee. There are more than a handful of nurses across the country whose stories I personally know. They cannot work after a patient assault. These professionals are now major advocates for Cannabis as Medicine. They suffer mostly from closed head injuries, the dangerous head butt! Results are brain fog, cognitive disabilities, PTSD, anxiety, chronic and acute pain. It is life changing.

While I have no first person experience with workplace violence, what I do have is an open ear for other nurses across the state who have reached out to me with a connection on social media. Their despair over the state of health care throughout the pandemic is dramatic. While I never heard of physical injury, The abusive language and threatening stances were there. Who is to say it couldn’t escalate. Should that even be tolerated. Is it in any other business? Moral injury has taken place, the spirit of our health care professionals has been broken. We need to protect them. Adding Health Care facility employees to HB 1121 should be a given. Please vote favorably for the amendment. Thank you. I stand for questions.

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