

House Judiciary Committee
Rep. Lawrence Klemin
Jan. 10, 2023
HB 1121

Good morning, Chairman Klemin and members of the committee. My name is Alexandra Martinez. I am a registered nurse and I work in Sanford Fargo Medical Center's intensive care unit (ICU). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 1121.

Let me start by telling you that nursing has always been my dream. I wasn't able to attend nursing school until I was 27. I was excited to work at Sanford Medical Center when I graduated. I joined the neuro/surgical nursing unit for one year and then advanced to the ICU eight months ago. I love my job. I enjoy taking care of our patients and I am grateful to be part of an amazing team of caregivers.

My world changed when a patient I was helping chose to kick me in the head. I was part of a team removing this patient's breathing tube. He was awake and we had explained the procedure to him. As we began the process, he punched one of my co-workers and managed to roll on his side to kick me in the head. I blacked out and fell to the ground.

When I woke up, I was outside the room and immediately felt pain in my face, my ribs and my hip. A neuro exam confirmed I had a concussion, but because I am pregnant, I decided against x-rays of my torso.

The nausea and headaches that followed are now gone, but the physical pain and the fear this will happen again is still there. I'm not able to do the physical activities I used to do and I am not myself. I am scared to go back and I cannot help but question if I should leave healthcare and return to my desk job where it is safer.

The majority of our patients are wonderful people who appreciate the support caregivers provide, but the number of patients who aim to hurt us seems to be increasing.

When I was asked to share my story with you, I asked if there was a chance the increased penalty could apply to the man that kicked me. I understand that cannot happen, but I am grateful for the opportunity to help change the law for other healthcare workers going forward.