

January 29, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility. All patients deserve to have access to care without fear of assault from other patients/visitors.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, our facility has a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At North Star Behavioral Health System we have implemented many strategies to help keep our employees safe, such as training all clinical staff in de-escalating physical and verbal aggression, additional staff as circumstances require, preemptive assessment of risk factors, code training for all staff, etc.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Dr. Andrew Mayo, PhD
CEO North Star Behavioral Health System



Wrangell Medical Center
500 3rd St.
Wrangell, AK 99679
Phone: 907-847-7846
Fax: 907-847-7122
www.wrangellmedicalcenter.org

Mission:

To enhance the quality of
life for all we serve

Vision:

Honor our heritage and be
the pride of the community

Values:

Integrity
Compassion and Caring
Trust
Transparency
Loyalty
Honoring our Heritage
Quality
Fiscal Responsibility

January 29, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence in recent years, including assaults with injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

During the 2 year period, January 2016 thru December 2017, Wrangell Medical Center has documented 24 Incident Reports involving aggression or aggressive actions. Of these Incident Reports; 16 of the 24 resulted in completion of "OSHA Form 07-6100 Employee Report of Occupational Injury or Illness to Employer". The majority of these reports were minimal injury and more for informational purposes. However, the sheer number averaging one aggressive episode per month is alarming, given the size of our small facility.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Wrangell Medical Center, we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe. Our staff training includes: *Workplace Violence Prevention* and *NCI - Non-Violent Crisis Intervention*. Both of these classes focus on ways to avoid or minimize aggressive episodes. Staff members learn how to identify potential aggression, de-escalation methods, and safe body mechanics to get release from or block aggressive actions from others.

There is the potential for future assaults falling into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felon offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Robert Rang, CEO

*Caring for
Southeast*



January 30, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118 and State Capitol Room 13
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is writing in support of HB 312, which addresses violence against health care workers.

ASHNHA is the membership organization representing Alaska's hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. Our members provide critical health care services in their communities, including inpatient acute care, emergency services, primary care and behavioral health. For over 60 years, ASHNHA members have worked to improve health care in Alaska.

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They are kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. Violence should not be an acceptable workplace hazard, but unfortunately for many caregivers, this has become the new normal.

This bill supports our physicians, nurses, CNAs and other staff who devote their careers to caring for Alaskans. We strongly support the ability of police officers to arrest without a warrant for fourth degree assault in a health care facility, and the addition of an aggravator in the felony assault statute when that assault is perpetrated against a medical professional in the performance of their duties. Both provisions send the message that as a state, we do not tolerate violence against health care workers. Hospitals should be safe and healing places, free of violence, where all in need can seek care. This bill helps to ensure that they remain those safe and sacred places.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this important legislation moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Becky Hultberg, President/CEO

Providence Alaska Medical Center



January 31, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp,

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

In a three hundred day period of 2017 Providence Alaska Medical Center experienced 181 reported assaults per the Alaska Statute definition of assault. Many medical professionals feel that being assaulted is a part of the profession and do not report the incidents. Other well qualified medical professionals seek employment in areas where there is less risk of being assaulted. This takes away from our community, and the people we are responsible to care for. As part of our mission we will always take care of the poor and vulnerable, but our medical professionals must feel safe in doing so. They must not, and should not feel that being assaulted is just a part of their jobs.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address

this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Providence Alaska Medical Center we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe.

- We have created a De-escalation Committee tasked with creating and revamping policies and procedures to better protect our medical professionals.
- We have more than doubled the amount of surveillance cameras throughout the facility.
- We have added de-escalation K9s to our security team.
- De-escalation classes are offered and are now mandatory for all employees.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Mandsager". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" and "M".

Richard Mandsager MD
Chief Executive, PAMC



**Danny Robinette, MD, FACS
Testimony, HB 312
House Judiciary Committee, Feb. 5, 2018**

For the record, my name is Danny Robinette and I am the Chief Medical Officer of Foundation Health Partners. Our organization represents Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Denali Center, and Tanana Valley Clinic and includes over 1600 health care employees.

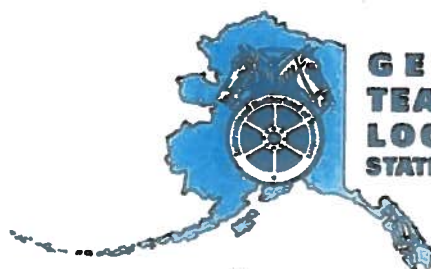
- I write today to support HB 312, which helps to address the serious concern of workplace violence in health care facilities. Alaska hospitals are experiencing an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. In the past 18 months, we have had over 182 incidents with either violence or a threat of violence to health care staff in our hospital alone. On average only about 35% of incidences are actually reported, which makes the potential of over 500 events with either violence or a significant threat of violence to our staff.
- Violence should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.
- Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.
- We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony assaults against a medical professional at a healthcare facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.



- We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Foundation Health Partners we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe: Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training (de-escalation techniques) for all nursing staff, security staff, and environmental services staff; increased presence of security in high risk areas with additional training for our security staff; processes to identify patients with a high risk of violence so staff can be aware and not interact with the patient alone.
- We urge you to pass this legislation and send a strong message to nurses, physicians and other caregivers that Alaska takes this issue seriously

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Danny R. Robinette".

Danny Robinette, MD, FACS
Chief Medical Officer
Foundation Health Partners



**GENERAL
TEAMSTERS
LOCAL 959
STATE OF ALASKA**

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Rick Boyles, Secretary-Treasurer
520 E 34th Ave., Suite 102, Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Phone (907) 751-8501 • Fax (907) 751-8599

February 2, 2018

**Honorable Matt Claman and Chuck Kopp
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801**

Re: HB 312 – Workplace Violence in Health Care Facilities

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

On behalf of the Teamster members we represent at South Peninsula Hospital, Inc. and Kodiak Island, we want to thank both of you for introducing HB 312 – Workplace Violence in Health care Facilities; specifically relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility.

Workplace violence is a serious problem. In hospitals, and other healthcare facilities, possible sources of violence include patients, visitors, intruders and even coworkers. Health care professionals including Doctors, Nurses, Emergency Room Technicians, and CNA's experience verbal threats and physical attacks by patients (usually drug and or alcohol related).

On average, incidents of workplace violence are more common in healthcare than in private industry. Many of the assaults fall in the category of fourth degree, requiring the officer to have a warrant in order to arrest. Most of these assaults occur in the late night hours, making it difficult at best, for an officer to attain a warrant. Eliminating the need for a warrant allows the offending individual to be removed from the healthcare facility quicker.

The bill also allows sentencing that could be considered above the presumptive range for a felony offense. We believe this sends a strong message not only to our Teamster Health Care professionals, but all health care professionals around the state.

Workplace violence has impacted many of our members over the years, requiring not only medical treatment, lost time from the job, but also serious stress and fatigue issue. As such, this creates an additional burden on Worker Compensation cost.

HB 312 may not end violence in healthcare facilities but can be one of many tools that healthcare facilities can utilize as they strive to create a more effective and comprehensive workplace violence plan. On behalf of our Teamster Healthcare professionals, we thank you and ask the members of the Judiciary committee to support the bill as well.

Sincerely,

TEAMSTERS LOCAL 959

P.P. Jane Huff

**Barbara Huff Tuckness
Director Government and Legislative Affairs**

BHT:jk



(907) 452-8181 Phone
(907) 458-5324 Fax
www.foundationhealth.org
1650 Cowles Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701

**Jim Lynch
Testimony, HB 312
House Judiciary Committee, Feb. 5, 2018**

For the record, my name is Jim Lynch and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and Denali Center. Our community owned hospital and long term care facility provides care for a primary service area of more than 7000 miles.

Last year we delivered more than 1000 babies, had more than 40,000 patient days and treated close to 40,000 patients in our Emergency Department. We also experienced almost 100 documented instances of workplace violence, and many occurrences don't get reported because they've become so commonplace. Workplace violence is not rare. We care for many of the community's most challenged members and with this comes its own unique set of challenges. Unfortunately biting, kicking, spitting, and hitting have become regular occurrences.

These situations occur in all areas of the hospital. Staff throughout our facility are routinely subjected to verbal and physical abuse while at the same time providing critical patient care.

- I am in support of HB 312, which helps to address the serious concern of workplace violence in health care facilities. Alaska hospitals are experiencing an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. At Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and Denali Center;
 - Our nurses, physicians, and care providers are routinely punched, kicked, scratched, spit on and have things thrown at them.
 - Several staff members have required medical care as a result of the abuse.
- Violence should not be an acceptable workplace hazard, but unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new norm. At Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, we're feeling the impact:
 - Employees quit to pursue job opportunities in less volatile environments. Some of the positions are hard to recruit for and are in high demand.
 - The relationship between a care provider and a patient is important – violence creates tension and stress in the relationship.
 - Nurses and Physicians who sustain injury at the hand of a patient often require medical care - this can create a delay of important care to the patient while the injured physician or nurse is replaced by another care provider. If this happens in the Emergency Department, it can create a shortage of physicians – making it more difficult to provide care to other patients.



- Increased workman's comp claims.
 - Increased operational expenses – security, equipment, staffing, etc.
- Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.
- We support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony assaults against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.
- We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and Denali Center we've implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe:
 - Increased staffing
 - Provided additional training and education
 - Security scheduled 24/7
 - Implemented a "threat alert" program
- We urge you to please pass this legislation and send a strong message to nurses, physicians and other caregivers that Alaska takes this issue seriously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Lynch
Chief Executive Officer
Fairbanks Memorial Hospital & Denali Center

February 6, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felony offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

Along with other Alaska hospitals, SEARHC has experienced this same increase in incidents between healthcare workers and disgruntled patients. Employees in high risk areas, such as Registration, Travel, Emergency Department and Pharmacy, repeatedly report aggressive confrontations and direct threats to their safety. Employees have received threats of gun attacks, physical violence and have witnessed as patients destroyed treatment rooms while in a violent state of mind. SEARHC has been fortunate to have experienced only a handful of assaults and very few injuries; however the impact on overall employee morale is detrimental to our mission as a healthcare organization.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At the Southeast Regional Healthcare Consortium we have implemented the following strategies to help keep our employees safe.

In 2016, SEARHC leadership initiated a comprehensive security assessment with the goal of evaluating our organization's approach to workplace security and to identify areas to focus improvement activities. The

assessment focused on the following four main areas of security management; effective security technologies, professional development of security staff, security training programs, and policies.

As a result of the assessment, SEARHC has invested significant resources into improving our physical security by installing electronic access control systems and video monitoring, as well as considering security improvements during design/construction projects. In addition to physical security improvements, SEARHC has also invested resources into training our healthcare workers and support staff in de-escalation techniques. These skills provide our staff with a base understanding of how to react to aggressive patient behavior and reduce the risk of injury to themselves and others.

While all SEARHC employees are encouraged to be aware of their physical security and participate in de-escalation training, we have also established a security team at our two largest facilities, Mt Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka and the Juneau based Ethel Lund Medical Center. As part of our professional development for our security leadership and officers, SEARHC is a member of the International Association of Healthcare Security and Safety (IAHSS). All officers are expected to complete the Certified Healthcare Security Officer training and progress through additional certifications as they advance in their career with SEARHC.

The work SEARHC has completed over the last few years has provided a safer working environment for our staff and we are committed to continued improvements. Additional support in the form of this bill will aid in our efforts.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Neumeister". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "D" and "N".

Dan Neumeister
Executive Senior VP
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
Direct: 907.364.4577 | Mobile: 530.680.5752
3100 Channel Drive, Ste. 300, Juneau, AK 99801 | searhc.org

February 5, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

The escalating concern at the staff level also has implications for other patients as resources are redeployed to address escalations. We have added security and implemented behavioral contracts for those with a history of violence, which has helped to some extent. We are in the process of training our employees on management and response strategies and have expanded our list of "risk factors" to increase our awareness of potential concerns.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felon offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices – which we have done. At the end of the day we are still behind the eight ball if limits and consequences do not exist so we greatly appreciate your willingness to be a champion for our caregivers and be their voice for the safety of everyone.



Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Taylor, CEO
Alaska Regional Hospital

Alaska State Medical Association

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • (907) 562-0304 • (907) 561-2063 (fax)

February 5, 2018

Representative Matt Claman, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Rm 118
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 312 – Crimes Against Medical Professionals – Letter of Support

Dear Representative Claman:

The Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA) is writing to thank you and Representative Kopp for introducing HB 312 and express our strong support of this legislation due to the increase in violence against Alaska's healthcare providers. Those working hard to care for and treat Alaskans with medical needs deserve to work in a safe environment free from workplace violence. As violence has escalated recently, staff has reported being kicked, punched, spit on, and verbally threatened. Both patients and staff deserve a safe environment when seeking and providing critical care.

As you know, under current law many of these incidents are classified as 4th degree assault requiring a warrant for arrest prohibiting responding officers from arresting and removing the individual from the scene. ASMA supports legislation giving law enforcement the necessary tools needed to swiftly remove perpetrators from the scene without first having to seek a warrant to do so and allowing medical professionals to administer care to those in need.

Further, we also support adopting an additional mitigating factor for felony assaults to increase penalties for those who "knowingly" commit crimes against our medical providers in the performance of their duties.

Such behavior should not be tolerated and this legislation will serve to protect the hard working individuals who provide critical care for those in need of medical attention. Again, we thank you and Representative Kopp for working together and introducing this legislation and urge the Legislature's support of House Bill 312.

Sincerely,



Peter Lawrason MD, President
Alaska State Medical Association

cc: House Judiciary Committee

February 8, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

The escalating concern at the staff level also has implications for other patients as resources are redeployed to address escalations. We have added security and implemented behavioral contracts for those with a history of violence, which has helped to some extent. We are in the process of training our employees on management and response strategies and have expanded our list of "risk factors" to increase our awareness of potential concerns.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felon offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices – which we have done. At the end of the day we are still behind the eight ball if limits and consequences do not exist so we greatly appreciate your willingness to be a champion for our caregivers and be their voice for the safety of everyone.



Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Ralph Costanzo, MD/CMO
Alaska Regional Hospital



Alaska Nurses Association

3701 E. Tudor Road, Suite 208

Anchorage, Alaska 99507

(907) 274-0827

www.aknurse.org

2/4/2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing on behalf of the Alaska Nurses Association in support of HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felony offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

We know all too well the risks that our nurses and other healthcare workers take every day when they care for the people in our communities. From 2002 to 2013 reports on serious workplace violence to healthcare workers showed they were four times as likely to be victims of violence than any other occupation. Hitting, biting, spitting, verbal abuse, kicking, and violence with deadly weapons is an all too commonplace experience for the healthcare worker. Surveys show that only 50-70% of these attacks are ever reported, making the actual occurrence much higher.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. This process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued and to the community that this will not be tolerated.

The Alaska Nurses Association certainly appreciates your support on behalf of nurses and other health care professionals in our state.

Regards,

Amber Michael, BSNS, RN
Alaska Nurses Association
Legislative Chair



February 13, 2018

Dear Chairman Claman, Vice Chair Fansler, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

As President of the Alaska Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) I am writing to express support for HB 312 on behalf of myself, the Alaska State Council, and more than 240 ENA members from throughout the state. Passage of HB 312 is a positive step toward addressing the issue of workplace violence in healthcare facilities across Alaska.

Violence in the workplace is not a new phenomenon in healthcare, yet remains present in the lives of healthcare workers, particularly those who work in the emergency department (ED). Long wait times, fear, pain, and uncertainty often contribute to the volatility that leads to episodes of workplace violence including verbal and physical assault directed at healthcare workers in the emergency setting.

According to a 2015 report released by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 20 percent of all workplace injuries affect healthcare workers, yet they account for 50 percent of physical assaults in the workplace. Additionally, OSHA reports that between 2002 and 2013, incidents of workplace violence experienced by healthcare workers were four times greater than for workers in the private sector.

Further, the American Journal of Emergency Medicine in 2013 identified that those employed in the ED, like my colleagues, and myself experience a violent event about once every two months. They also discovered that registered nurses (RNs) working in the ED are more likely to experience acute stress compared to other healthcare workers.

In 2016, Alaska ENA developed a survey for our members as well as their colleagues asking about workplace violence. We had 169 responses from healthcare professionals around the state including RN's, MD's, X-Ray Technicians, and Laboratory personal. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of those who answered had experienced verbal assault by a patient and 78% had experienced physical assault in the previous year. When asked if they felt safe at work, 33% said 'yes' and 57% answered 'sometimes'. Another concerning response of this survey when we asked if this affected job satisfaction, 50% said 'yes', they were less satisfied. Imagine coming to work and not feeling safe or knowing you would experience physical or verbal abuse on a frequent basis and not having job satisfaction. How long would you stay?

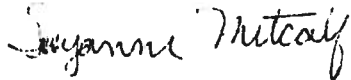
Many healthcare providers, including myself choose our profession based on our desire to provide care and help others. Working in an environment where you do not feel safe and experience verbal and physical assault frequently is not what we envisioned. We are asking you to help.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of HB 312, this is definitely a step forward but much work remains to be done to stop incidents of workplace violence against healthcare workers who care

for Alaska's most vulnerable. HB 312 brings awareness to the issue of workplace violence, sends a clear message that verbal and physical assaults against health care professionals is not acceptable, and is not tolerated. We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against medical professionals in a healthcare facility. This sends a clear message of support and encouragement to our healthcare providers whom we value.

I urge your support for expedient passage of HB 312. The Alaska State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association stands ready to support your efforts any way we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Metcalf".

Suzanne Metcalf, MSN, RN, CEN
President, Alaska Emergency Nurses Association