

Lizzie Kubitz

From: Rep. Matt Claman
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 3:58 PM
To: Lizzie Kubitz
Subject: FW: In regards to HB 312

From: Kayleigh White [mailto:kswhite618@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 2:17 PM
To: Rep. Matt Claman <Rep.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov>
Subject: In regards to HB 312

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

I am writing in an attempt to open a discussion regarding HB 312, “an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a healthcare facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility”.

While I understand the concern over the increase in workplace violence I do not believe that HB 312 is the solution. Oftentimes, the assaults that are happening are a result of mental illness, and arresting these individuals is not the solution as it only perpetuates the cycle of criminalizing mental illness. Rather, choosing to have staff that are trained to manage these behaviors, and to de-escalate and restrain these individuals would be a better use of state resources.

I am saddened that medical staff are reporting feeling unsafe at work. I believe that needing to call in police reinforcements nightly, or near nightly will not create a safer work environment, in fact, setting that sort of environment could be triggering to other patients and lead to an even greater increase in aggression. Empowering hospital staff to be able to de-escalate patients and manage abhorrent behaviors without using force is useful in creating a stable environment of care.

Arresting patients for 4th degree assaults will only perpetuate the revolving door that already exists for many suffering from mental illness. These individuals are at a greater risk for assault, and maltreatment while incarcerated, where they may not be competent enough to stand trial anyway.

I am not in agreement for making it easier for law enforcement to arrest individuals without a warrant. I think that the process of acquiring a warrant for arrest is in place for a reason, and it is to ensure that there is a system of checks and balances in place to ensure that all individuals are being treated fairly. Eliminating the need for a warrant brings us further and further away from the presumption of innocence.

Another option is implementing a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), as developed by the University of Memphis. This not only allows for assaultive patients to maintain their dignity, it also reduces the rate for law enforcement injuries, in addition to reducing the amount of time that law enforcement spends on these types of calls.

I am appreciative of awareness being brought to the issue of assaults on healthcare staff, and hope that this will be taken into account in proceeding with this bill.

Sincerely,

Kayleigh White
MSW Student