

Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals: Wisconsin nurse testifies before Congress in support of Federal Workplace Violence Prevention legislation

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Milwaukee, WI— Workplace violence is a daily reality in health care. Hospitals and other health care settings are centers for healing, but inside those walls, the people charged with caring for the sick are often victims of violence themselves.

“When health care workers show up to work, they shouldn’t have to worry about whether a patient is going to hurt them. Violence should never be part of the job,” said Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals (WFNHP) President, Candice Owley.

This afternoon, WFNHP member, Patricia “Patt” Moon-Updike, RN, testified before the U. S. House of Representatives in support of the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309). This bill requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop enforceable safety standards for front-line health care and social service workers, who are five times more likely to be assaulted at work than the rest of the labor force. Ms. Moon-

Updike is one of those workers. She lost her career to workplace violence when she was assaulted by a patient while working at the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division.

Ms. Moon-Updike told Congress, “I LOVED being a nurse. I do not know what to call myself now. There is a deep loss when you used to make a difference in the lives of people, in your true calling and passion, and in that place is extreme sadness and fear. The assault that happened to me was not a random or freak event, but a predictable scenario that could have been prevented had there been a plan in place and more trained staff there to assist.”

She went on to say, “We can’t accept that violence is part of the job. Prevention is possible when systems are put into place to reduce the risk of violence. When nurses and health care workers are safer—so are our patients. We need the equipment, personnel and training to do our jobs safely. Our patients and our health care system cannot afford to lose more good nurses and health care workers to preventable violence.”

“Thankfully, this bill provides long-needed protections and specific and enforceable safety standards for people who work in front-line health care jobs,” said Candice Owley. “As a union of health care professionals, we welcome this effort to finally make federal workplace-safety regulations a priority, and we are extremely proud of Patt for giving a voice to those who cannot speak for fear of retaliation.”