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**TESTIMONY OF THE NEVADA ORGANIZATION OF NURSE LEADERS
BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Committee on Judiciary. I am Sandy Rush, AVP of nursing at St. Rose Dominican Hospital in Henderson.

Exec Board N 3.5 SC
I am pleased to present testimony on behalf of the Nevada Organization of Nurse Leaders membership of nursing executives, managers, consultants, and educators. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to discuss A.B. 53 that enhances criminal penalty for committing assault upon health care providers.

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health cites that over one million US workers are assaulted in the workplace every year, and that most of these assaults occur in hospitals, nursing homes, and social service agencies. In fact, healthcare workers are more likely to be attacked at work than are prison police officers. In the healthcare sectors, workers must deal with aggressive patients, late-night confrontations in the emergency room, and unhappy people. Nurses feel vulnerable to violence and feel that nursing is more dangerous now than in years past. Reasons for this include the violent nature of society today and the increase number of potentially dangerous patients in the ED's. In addition, decreased lengths of stay, increased waiting times for beds, and anger over hospital policies cause patients and families to become frustrated, and these frustrations sometimes lead to violence against the health care worker.

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In 2002, in just 4 hospitals in Southern Nevada, over 3,000 Security calls were made due to disruptive patients and guests. If we use the estimate that OSHA cites that 80% of all cases go unreported, then an additional 2400 calls should have been made.

In a period of just 2 weeks, 2 nurses at my facility were assaulted. One incident occurred in the ER, where a patient and family member hit a nurse, and then verbally threatened her. Another nurse was punched in the head with a fist by an inpatient. Other hospitals have reported a stabbing of a nurse with a fork while she was in the process of assisting the patient. All of these patients were alert and mindful of their actions.

Many states have laws that have enhanced the penalty for committing an assault upon health care workers. Harsher penalties do help deter attacks. Nevada's health care workers offer invaluable resources to the care of Nevada's patients. Health care workers should have some expectations of safety, and we must be champions for their protection.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to provide this testimony.