

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Alison Davis and I am the medical director of the ED in Rutland. In past years, I have testified for both the house and the senate on the issue of workplace violence and the need to protect healthcare workers from mental and physical harm. Our hospitals are working hard to protect staff. In Rutland, we have enhanced security coverage, introduced a metal detector at the ED entrance and begun searching patient belongings for weapons. We have revamped the training we provide to staff in de-escalation and safe restraint techniques. Nonetheless, our staff, and sometimes other patients, continue to be struck, spit on, shoved and verbally assaulted.

Agitated and uncooperative intoxicated individuals with no medical needs are a danger to staff and prevent us from caring for your loved ones. If the police have determined that these individuals are unsafe in the community, then the police should have the option to keep them safe, warm and dry for the hours it will take to regain capacity. If the only option you give police is to bring these individuals to the ED, you will be endangering staff and other patients. This statute, if not repealed, will add to healthcare costs at a time we are trying to control them. It also sends a message to healthcare workers that their safety is not a priority. The simple threat of this statute going into effect has already caused anxiety and fear for healthcare staff in the ED. I'm asking you to support the repeal.

Our local police are vital partners in the work to keep staff and patients safe. This allows the ED to fulfill its mission, caring for patients who are having a medical or psychiatric emergency. We have been fortunate to have one of the few remaining public inebriate programs in Rutland. Last year, Grace House cared for almost 200 individuals who did not need any medical attention. Most of the time, intoxication is simply intoxication. The PIP is an example of right care, right place, right time. Please help us on the front lines care for our communities by repealing the statute.