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Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Praises Senator Baldwin for Introducing Workplace Violence Prevention Legislation to Protect Health Care Workers Following Wisconsin Nurse’s Testimony

Milwaukee, WI— Today Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin introduced legislation to protect health and social service workers from violence on the job. Her action came after hearing a passionate presentation by a Milwaukee nurse who had been violently injured on the job.

“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,” said Candice Owley, President of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals (WFNHP). “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. Thankfully, the bill introduced today by Senator Baldwin provides long-needed protections and enforceable safety standards for people who work in front-line health care jobs. As a union of health care professionals, we welcome this effort to finally make workplace-safety a priority.”

“Our health care and social services workers, and the people they serve, deserve to work and receive services in an environment free from workplace violence,” said Senator Baldwin. “I’m proud to lead this important effort to provide overdue protections and safety standards to a workforce that serves people during some of their most vulnerable moments. This bill promotes a healthy environment that is good for both workers and those they serve, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this important effort.”

On February 27, 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 house version of the bill requires 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.”

When asked what inspired her to go to Washington to fight for this bill, Patt replied, “I didn’t know when I would be ready to do this--to help other health care workers. And, about three weeks ago at our medical trauma center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we lost a nurse and she was killed in the place that she worked.” Patt went on to say, “There is a sisterhood and a brotherhood of nurses and we put ourselves out there to help people. We help your mothers, your brothers, your daughters, your sons, your wives, your husbands. We do that. And who is helping us?”

While in DC, Ms. Moon-Updike also met with U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, who was inspired by what she heard, and today, introduced the Senate version of the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act.

“Our union is proud that Wisconsin will now lead the way in the efforts to protect this Country’s dedicated health care workforce,” said Owley.

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Wisconsin FNHP represents nurses & health professionals throughout the state of Wisconsin, and is the local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers healthcare division, which represents more than 130,000 nurses and health professionals in a variety of disciplines and settings.

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