

Sainato



Medical Professionals Newsletter

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Bill to protect health care employees from assault introduced in state House

Legislation I co-sponsored, House Bill 1992, would require Pennsylvania hospitals and other health care facilities to take steps to protect nurses and other health care workers from violence on the job.

The bill, which is backed by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, would require hospitals to assess security risks in their facilities, find ways to create a safer workplace and help victims of violence report incidents.

Workplace violence against health professionals is on the rise, and for the past year PASNAP has been pushing for legislation to address this troubling trend. It occurs in rural, suburban and urban hospitals.

I commend PASNAP for creating the Workplace Violence Prevention Task Force, which aims to raise public awareness about the issue, work with hospitals to correct unsafe conditions, and pass legislation which will help prevent violent incidents.

The bill is the result of work by the task force, which collaborated with the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, local law enforcement agencies and elected officials.

Health care professionals care for people when they are sick and vulnerable, and they should be able to do their jobs in a safe environment free of violence.

STATE BUDGET HARMS HEALTH CARE

I voted against the 2011-12 state budget because I believe it is bad for health care in our Commonwealth.

Hospitals had their assessment paid to the Commonwealth increased by 9 percent while state funding for uncompensated care was cut by 20 percent. Hospitals already eat at least 50 percent of the cost of uncompensated care, and this budget makes it much worse.

In addition, hospital payments funded through the following line items in the state budget were cut 25 percent:

- **Trauma Center payments** made to Pennsylvania's accredited trauma centers, which improve access to trauma care for the most critically injured patients;
- **Critical Access Hospital payments** made to hospitals that meet Medicare's definition for "critical access" hospitals, which helps assure access to care in underserved areas of Pennsylvania;
- **Hospital-Based Burn Center payments** made to certified burn centers; and
- **Obstetric and Neonatal Service payments** made to qualifying hospitals that provide obstetric and neonatal services to Medical Assistance recipients.

The budget also cut funding to Pennsylvania's medical schools. Funds for medical schools at Temple, Penn State, and the University of Pittsburgh were cut by a total of \$19.9 million, and funding for medical schools at Drexel, Thomas Jefferson, and the University of Pennsylvania were cut by a total of \$13 million.

To make matters worse, early this year Gov. Tom Corbett eliminated adultBasic. The program was created by former Gov. Tom Ridge using tobacco settlement money to provide bare-bones health insurance for working low-income adults and their families. It served about 40,000 Pennsylvanians and their families.



Rep. Sainato helps break ground for Jameson Hospital's new emergency and surgical unit.

HOUSE OKS BILL TO IMPROVE STROKE TREATMENT

The state House passed legislation I supported which would require the Pennsylvania Department of Health to recognize hospitals that have been certified as primary stroke centers.

Primary stroke centers are hospitals that make exceptional efforts to ensure they are equipped to provide the rapid and specialized care needed to treat stroke patients. This is important because stroke is the third-leading cause of death in the nation and our state, and is also one of the leading causes of long-term disability.

When it comes to a stroke, time lost means brain loss. Rapid response can mean the difference between life and death. This legislation would help to establish a coordinated system of care to save lives and minimize the long-term effects of stroke.

House Bill 1400 would require the state Department of Health to maintain a list of primary stroke centers, provide that list to the medical director of every licensed emergency medical services provider in Pennsylvania, and post the list on its website.

The health department also would be required to make available a nationally recognized standardized stroke assessment tool and establish procedures related to the pre-hospital assessment, treatment and transportation of stroke patients by licensed EMS providers. These procedures include plans for triage and transport of acute stroke patients to the closest primary stroke center or an alternate facility within a specified time from the onset of symptoms. Protocols also would be developed to ensure proper training for certified EMS providers.

House Bill 1400 awaits action by the Senate.

Warning signs of a stroke

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.



Lyme disease education, treatment legislation introduced

Legislation has been introduced aimed at promoting better treatment of and education about Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses.

House Bill 272 would require insurers to cover treatment of Lyme disease and tick-borne illnesses if the diagnosis and a treatment plan are documented.

It also would create a task force to work with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Department of Health on statewide education about Lyme disease and related illnesses.

Pennsylvania has the most Lyme disease cases in the nation. There are no laws that mandate specific health insurance coverage of the illness.

The bill is before the House Human Services Committee.



Measure would help financially strapped ambulance companies

The state House of Representatives passed legislation I helped advance that would require health insurance companies to directly reimburse ambulance companies responding to 9-1-1 emergency calls.

The Ambulance Association of Pennsylvania has listed House Bill 1344 as a top priority. Ambulance organizations lose hundreds of thousands of dollars annually when patients refuse to turn over payments.

I serve as Democratic chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, which amended and approved the bill before it passed the full House of Representatives.



Protecting the title of nurse

The use of the title “nurse” is not protected under Pennsylvania law. But House Bills 469 and 470, which were reported out of the state House Professional Licensure Committee, would change that.

A licensed nurse is a person who has completed a state-approved school of nursing program and has successfully passed a state Board of Nursing licensing test to become a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse. Nurses must complete continuing education classes to keep their license.

The bills, which as of this writing are in a position to be voted by the full House of Representatives, were amended by the committee to provide an exemption for “nurse assistive personnel,” who would include nurses aides, nursing assistants and others who practice under the supervision of a professional or practical nurse.

Recognizing our nurses

Pennsylvania nurses work hard to make Pennsylvania a healthier state, and it’s only fitting that the legislature recognize their efforts.

Nurses Week in Pennsylvania is held in conjunction with Florence Nightingale’s birthday every year. This year Nurses Week was held May 6 to 12. Hundreds of nurses from across the state came to the state Capitol for a news conference and an educational session.



RESOLUTION CALLS FOR STATE TRACKING OF MRSA



A resolution in the House of Representatives urges the Pennsylvania Department of Health to revise its disease monitoring regulations to include staph infections acquired during hospital stays as reportable illnesses.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is currently tracked internally at each health care facility, and responses and preventative measures are in place to monitor health care associated infections, including MRSA. But they do not have to be reported to the state Health Department.

House Resolution 42 urges regulatory changes to monitor and prevent infections. The health department monitors 73 communicable diseases through various levels of reporting requirements, but MRSA is not one of them.

The new regulations would treat MRSA infections as seriously as chicken pox.

Most MRSA infections occur in people who have been in hospitals or other health care settings, such as nursing homes and dialysis centers. When it occurs in these settings, it’s known as health care-associated MRSA (HA-MRSA). HA-MRSA infections typically are associated with invasive procedures or devices, such as surgeries, intravenous tubing or artificial joints.

Another type of MRSA infection occurs in healthy people. This form, community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA), often begins as a painful skin boil. It’s spread by skin-to-skin contact. At-risk populations include groups ranging from high school wrestlers, child care workers and people who live in crowded conditions.



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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE 9TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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Here to serve you!

My staff and I can help you with a wide variety of state-government related issues

Feel free to contact us at:

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Or, you can reach me through my website at www.pahouse.com/Sainato/contact.asp.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP WITH:

- Information on property foreclosures
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program applications
- Senior citizen information, including PACE and PACENET and living wills
- PennDOT forms, information or concerns
- Voter registration and absentee ballots
- Problems with any state government agency
- Tours of the state Capitol
- House citations to honor accomplishments of individuals or groups or family milestones