

Little Hoover Commission

My name is Eric Soto. I am a 2nd generation Psychiatric Technician at Metropolitan State Hospital. I began my career with the state at nineteen years old and have dedicated the past seventeen years caring for patients suffering from mental illness.

I come from a family of dedicated California State employees. Nine of my family members are either currently working for the state or are retired from state service. We work or have worked in all three departments that employ Psychiatric Technicians; Department of Developmental Disabilities, Corrections, and the Department of State Hospitals. None of us entered this profession with any thoughts that we would get rich, we entered this field because it was an honorable way to provide for our families. Having a mother, Aunt, and Uncle pave the way, the younger generation all understood the risks and the conditions that we would face. Growing up with my mother working the Noc shift my brothers and I would often get a call from her at 7 am telling us that she was being mandated again and we would have to either walk to school or find a ride. I remember many holidays and birthdays, it was common to see empty chairs around the table for those mandated to work another shift.

When we go to work each day we can never say for certain if we will be going home after eight hours or after sixteen. It becomes almost impossible to plan or maintain a semblance of a "normal" family life. You cannot just look at the Mandatory Overtime hours, if you do you will only get a part of the picture. Staff sign up for Voluntary Overtime in the hopes of dropping their names down on the rotation. We have had many instances of staff signing up for overtime two, three even four days in a row and STILL end up getting stuck. I can personally attest to being mandated to work a total of 16 hours, being assigned a 1:1, fighting, struggling to keep my eyes open.

A reality of the Psychiatric Technician profession is often we work with individuals with severe mental illnesses. Unfortunately quite a few of these individuals as a result of hallucinations, paranoid delusions, or command auditory hallucinations can become extremely violent. Having exhausted staff who have been working multiple shifts being charged with keeping fellow staff and patients safe is a dangerous practice. If you worked side by side with me how would you feel if your safety depended upon me who is working their 2nd or 3rd double shift for the week?

Plain and simple do what you can and get us more staff so we can continue to to treat our patients in a safe environment and have a life outside the workplace.