



with News & Classifieds From: **The Reporter**

New listings of local real estate.
[CLICK HERE](#) [CLICK HERE](#)



Find the best Office & Business space in NJ
CLICK HERE

→ [SEARCH](#)

→ [FIND A BUSINESS](#)

NEWS

The Star-Ledger [Click here to subscribe!](#)

» More From The Star-Ledger

New Jersey

Protection against 'problem' nurses

Corzine and Lautenberg seek expansion of MD data bank to include other health workers

Friday, April 16, 2004

BY CAROL ANN CAMPBELL
Star-Ledger Staff

Nurses fired for stealing drugs would get reported. So would pharmacists who lost their jobs for making repeated and serious mistakes. Also listed would be respiratory therapists who hit and abused their patients.

The very worst and most dangerous health care workers would be tracked by a federal data bank under a plan proposed yesterday by New Jersey's two U.S. senators. Sen. Jon Corzine (D.-N.J.) said he wanted to "break the chain of silence" that he blamed for allowing accused killer nurse Charles Cullen to move from hospital to hospital. Corzine and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D.-N.J.) plan to introduce the bill next week.

All health care facilities would be required to check the data bank before hiring any licensed or state-certified health care workers under the plan, called the Safe Healthcare Reporting Act, or SHARE.

"Charles Cullen kept killing and our health system kept hiring him," Corzine said of the nurse who was fired from five hospitals and one nursing home. New Jersey authorities said Cullen told them he has killed as many as 40 patients in the last 15 years.

The Cullen case has provoked outrage and complaints about the system that governs nurses, who are the health professionals closest to patients' bedsides. The proposal by Corzine and Lautenberg would expand the National Practitioner Data Bank, which now tracks physicians, to include all other licensed health care workers.

The data bank would be opened to include more than 2.6 million of the nation's nurses as well as millions of other certified health care workers such as physical and respiratory therapists.

Hospital officials in New Jersey and Pennsylvania did not pass along to future employers their own concerns about Cullen even though he was investigated

INSIDE News

- » [Elections](#)
- » [Español](#)
- » [NewsFlash](#)
- » [Newspapers](#)
- » [News Obituaries](#)
- » [Paid Death Notices](#)
- » [Photos](#)
- » [Weather Center](#)
- » [WebFlash](#)

▶ [SEND THIS PAGE](#)

▶ [PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

SPEAK UP!

- » [National Politics](#)
- » [Just Jersey](#)
- » [More Forums](#)

▶ [Log On to ChatXtra!](#)

NEW JERSEY LOTTERY

» [MEGAMILLIONS JACKPOT is \\$ MEGA MILLION](#)

An Advertising Section

- » [Win the Cast Album for Broadway's "Avenue Q"!](#)
- » [Shopping: Stores & Yellow Pages](#)
- » [Fun Guide: Things to do in NJ](#)

SOME OF THIS WEEK'S BEST LOCAL AUTOS



1998 Pontiac Grand Prix GT
\$7,450

Offered by: Chrysler Jeep of Woodbury
 » [Get Details](#)



2003 Cadillac CTS \$28,903

Offered by: Crown Cadillac Oldsmobile
 » [Get Details](#)



at least twice over links to suspicious patient deaths. No hospital in New Jersey ever reported Cullen to the New Jersey Board of Nursing until the case was reported in the media.

The Corzine-Lautenberg proposal aims to plug other holes that allowed Cullen to keep working:

- It directs states to develop ways to report criminal background information on health care workers to the federal data bank. Cullen was convicted of criminal trespassing and harassment in Pennsylvania in 1993 after breaking into the home of a fellow nurse. Future employers complained that they never knew of the convictions.
- Health care facilities would have to report serious problems -- including violations of health care standards -- to the data bank as well as to any state licensing boards.
- Failure to report infractions or to check the data bank before hiring a licensed worker could result in penalties of \$50,000.
- The SHARE act provides protection from lawsuits to employers that report problems in good faith. Employees, in turn, must be given the chance to review and contest such reports.

In 1987, Congress voted to expand the data bank to include other health care practitioners, but the plan was never implemented.

The senators' bill would grant health employers access to another bank that has been closed to them: The Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank. It collects information on health care fraud and includes actions taken by state licensing boards.

Corzine said the act would replace a smattering of differing state laws. He said some health care workers in trouble in one state can easily move to another.

The senators were flanked by several nursing union officials. Ann Twomey, a nurse and president of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees, called the Cullen case "terrible and extreme" and said she hoped the data bank would decrease risk to patients.

The data bank is funded by the small fees paid each time an employer checks on a potential employee. Also present was William K. Cors, chief medical officer of Somerset Medical Center. Cullen has been arrested for killing one patient at Somerset and for attempting to kill another there. Cors called the legislation a "good first step."

The New Jersey Hospital Association, contacted yesterday, said the organization needs to study the bill closely. Nonetheless, a spokeswoman, Kerry McKean Kelly, said the legislation "could be one step toward comprehensive reform."

Carol Ann Campbell covers medicine. She may be reached at ccampbell@starledger.com or (973) 392-4148.

» Send This Page | » Print This Page

Copyright 2004 The Star-Ledger. Used by NJ.com with permission.

MORE NEW JERSEY NEWS

2001 BMW 740 i \$35,995

Offered by: JMK BMW

» [Get Details](#)

**Find More Of The Best
Local Autos On**



» [Click Here](#)

Click Here

STAR-LEDGER

- » [Get Home Delivery](#)
- » [Carriers Wanted](#)
- » [Newspapers in Education](#)
- » [Donate to The Fresh Air Fund](#)
- » [Shop, Click, & Save with The Star-Ledger Money Book!](#)
- » [Place Classifieds](#)
- » [Star Ledger Ads](#)
- » [Spotlight on the Stage: Broadway Listings from The Star-Ledger](#)
- » [Get Electronic Delivery](#)
- » [Contact Us](#)

» **Advertise With Us**

VISIT OUR ADVERTISERS

- >> [Visit SI Bank & Trust](#)
- >> [Archdiocese of Newark/Catholic Cemeteries-Click here for locations and information.](#)
- >> [Shop Rockaway Bedding](#)
- >> [Register now for Rutgers Newark Summer Session!](#)

- In Williams trial, finally time for first thing
- Millstone marks the suffering of priestly abuse
- Driver critically hurt as truck rams into tree

[More Stories](#) | [14-Day Archive](#) | [Complete News Index](#)

[The Best Local Classifieds: Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Place An Ad](#)



Special Home Delivery Offers!

[The Star-Ledger](#) | [The Times, Trenton](#) | [The Jersey Journal](#)
[Gloucester Co. Times](#) | [The Express-Times](#)
[Bridgeton News](#) | [Today's Sunbeam](#)

[About Us](#) | [Help/Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#).

© 2004 [NJ.com](#). All Rights Reserved.



Home	News+Biz	Local	Sports	Forums+Chat	Cams+Radio	Living	Entertainment	CLASSIFIEDS
----------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------

Get The Best Local...
[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#)
[All Classifieds](#) | [Place An Ad](#)