

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Madeleine Dean
U.S. House of Representatives
120 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Larry Bucshon, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Dean and Bucshon:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinical partners — including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers — and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) applauds you for your leadership in introducing the Safety from Violence for Healthcare Employees (SAVE) Act of 2022.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, health care workers across the nation have experienced a sharp increase in incidences of workplace violence, with no sign that this trend is receding. Despite the diligent efforts of hospitals and health systems to prevent violence, health care workers remain five times more likely than *any other type of worker* to be physically attacked on the job, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Violence in the health care setting has implications beyond the injuries sustained by the dedicated men and women of our workforce. Our member hospitals and health systems report that workplace violence and intimidation make it more difficult for clinical staff to provide quality patient care. Nurses and physicians cannot provide attentive care when they are afraid for their personal safety, distracted by disruptive patients or family members, or traumatized from prior attacks. In addition, violent attacks at health care facilities can delay urgently needed care for other patients, reduce employee productivity, and increase the likelihood of adverse events.

Despite the proliferation of workplace violence and its deleterious effects on our health care system, no federal law protects the health workforce from assault or intimidation. In contrast, federal laws criminalize assault and intimidation against aircraft and airport workers. Vigorous enforcement of these statutes has helped create a safer traveling environment, deter violent behavior and ensure that offenders face severe consequences for their actions.



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Your bipartisan legislation, modeled after the federal statute protecting aircraft and airport workers, would make it a federal crime to assault or intimidate a hospital employee and as a result interfere with the ability of that employee to perform their duties. Enhanced penalties would apply to acts that involve dangerous weapons, result in bodily injury or are committed during an emergency declaration.

In addition, your bill would establish a federal grant program at the Department of Justice to augment hospitals' efforts to reduce violence, by funding violence prevention training programs, coordination with state and local law enforcement, and physical plant improvements, such as metal detectors and panic buttons.

Ensuring a safe and secure environment for our workforce is essential to providing quality care to the patients and communities we serve. America's hospitals and health systems are pleased to support this measure and stand ready to work with you to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard J. Pollack
President and CEO