



TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

**FROM: Celina Huffman, BA, BSN, RN, CMSRN
Nurse Director
AdventHealth Shawnee Mission**

DATE: January 23, 2023

RE: HB 2023

On behalf of **AdventHealth Shawnee Mission**, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB 2023**.

Since 1962, we're proud to extend our healing mission in Johnson County. At AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, we are home to the busiest Emergency Department in the county at our 504-bed hospital campus. We employ more than 1,000 nurses and have been recognized with Magnet Status, the highest level of nursing achievement. We serve the greater Kansas City metro area and beyond with 80 percent of our patients coming from Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

The health care staffing crisis in this country is increasingly concerning. It's critical we continue to explore and develop initiatives that not only create a pipeline to health care careers and attract health care professionals to Kansas, but also retain the current workforce and support a safe environment.

Workplace violence was a growing issue in hospitals and health care staffing shortages were predicted pre-pandemic but were exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Workplace violence in hospitals is a contributing factor to career-limiting stress, burnout and injury for our workforce.

Leadership in hospitals and in our community have an obligation to advocate for ways to combat workplace violence, support our caregivers and hold offenders accountable. Acts of abuse may include verbal threats and physical abuse by patients or family members which may cause interruption of the care environment, personal injury and mental trauma.

According to the [American Nursing Association](#), 1 in 4 nurses are assaulted at work, however it is estimated that this number could be double due to failure to report.

Unlike other professions or places of business, federal law (EMTALA) requires hospitals to treat all who walk through our Emergency Department doors. Acts of violence interfere with our ability to deliver critical emergency services.

In 2022, our Shawnee Mission campus experienced an average of almost nine incidents per month where an associate was battered, injured, or a weapon is involved during an incident. These violent incidents are intentional and not the result of a medical condition.

Specifically, in 2022 alone, our staff members were victims of punching, kicking, choking, biting, headbutting, spitting and forceful grabbing, resulting in physical injuries including concussions and impacting mental health for our staff.

AdventHealth is committed to supporting our team members and providing them the resources they need to give the highest quality of care to our patients. Our hospital's workplace violence prevention committee has implemented policies to empower our team members. We invest heavily in education, training, and signage to protect our caregivers and all patients. We not only carefully track and review incidents but also recommend training programs, evaluate interventions and improvements, enhance treatment plans related to high-violence diagnoses, review policies and processes and provide support to team members.

AdventHealth has invested in personal security alerts for our clinical team members and panic buttons throughout our clinical areas in addition to an enhanced security presence. Additionally, we provide free confidential counseling sessions to staff.

This issue has become so significant that KC metro hospitals came together to form the Kansas City Workplace Violence Collaborative. We develop innovative strategies to increase reporting of violence and share best practices for education, training and prevention – including the safe care of violent patients – and advocate for protections for our workforce. This team collaborated with the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) and Missouri Hospital Association (MHA), along with area organizations to align responses and care plans to mitigate acts of violence.

House Bill 2023 would increase penalties for battery against a hospital health care provider and create a crime of interference of emergency services at a hospital similar to the state's current state law.

We support this legislation to increase penalties, which we hope will be a deterrent and increase awareness, reporting and support for our staff. We believe we will have better reporting if tolerance is not shown and those attackers with intent are held accountable.

This is a national problem and many states have taken similar action to increase penalties. We hope you will support HB 2023 to support the health care workforce. Together, we can achieve these goals and improve safety for all in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal and our testimony. We hope the committee will support this bill favorably. Thank you for your service to our state.