



**Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Relations

Date: February 10, 2022

RE: Proponent Testimony for House Bill 2620

The Kansas Hospital Association, on behalf of our 122 community hospital members, appreciates very much the opportunity to appear before you in support of House Bill 2620.

This legislation increases penalties for assault of a health care worker and creates a new crime modeled off of interference statutes already established and known in Kansas for other first responder services such as those provided by EMS, Fire, and Law Enforcement comes at a critical time for hospitals across Kansas.

As this committee has heard, Kansas, like many other states, is facing a crisis in healthcare. The problem, in many ways, is one of staffing shortages that are not unique to our industry. However, our industry is unique in that we cannot turn people away, nor do we want to.

The unfortunate reality is that health care workers are assaulted on the job every day. These actions include but are not limited to assault, aggravated assault, and battery. Any hospital employee can be a victim in a large hospital, a small clinic, or anywhere that health care is offered. Often, the assailant is not the patient receiving services but those visiting the hospital who are asked to follow protocols required of the hospital by federal or state policy.

These instances are on the rise. In the United States, injuries caused by violent attacks against medical professionals grew by 67% from 2011 to 2018 with healthcare workers five times more likely to experience workplace violence than workers in all other industries, according to figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics¹. A global study from 2020 found that health care professionals were roughly 50% more likely than others in their communities to have been harassed, bullied or hurt in the last two years.²

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/workplace-violence-healthcare-2018.htm>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7780430/pdf/bmjopen-2020-046620.pdf>

The results of this personal trauma are not just physical, but they have a long-term emotional impact on those working in health care. These instances are increasing at a time when the industry has lost nearly half a million workers since February 2020.³

Hospitals want to support strong sanctions that allow the employee and the hospital to seek legal recourse in instances that need to be addressed through the criminal process. Now is a crucial time for Kansas to send a message to our health care workers that we support them and that they shouldn't have to face threats and assaults on the job.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2620. We appreciate the committee considering this crucial matter.

³ <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-11-15/us-faces-crisis-of-burned-out-health-care-workers>