



**Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Relations

Date: January 23, 2023

RE: Proponent Testimony for House Bill 2023

The Kansas Hospital Association, on behalf of our 123 community hospital members, appreciates the opportunity to appear before you in support of House Bill 2023.

This legislation, which increases penalties for assault of health care workers 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 crisis, 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 every day, healthcare workers are assaulted on the job. These actions include but are not limited to assault, aggravated assault, and battery. Any health care worker can be a victim regardless of type of hospital, clinic, or practice location. Often, the assailant is not the patient receiving services, but those visiting the hospital who are asked to follow protocols required 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. In addition, a global study from 2020 found that healthcare professionals were roughly 50% more likely than others in their communities to have been harassed, bullied or hurt in the last two years.²

The results of this personal trauma are not just physical. They also have long-term emotional impacts 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

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

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

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

Hospitals want to support strong sanctions that provide opportunities for 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 our healthcare workers a message that we support them and that they shouldn't face threats and assaults on the job.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2023. We appreciate the committee considering this very crucial matter.