

ENACT THE SAVE HEALTHCARE WORKERS ACT

THE SOLUTION

Enact legislation to provide protections for health care workers from workplace assault.

THE BIG PICTURE

In recent years, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, health care workers have experienced an increase in assaults and intimidation, both physical and verbal, while in the workplace. Despite the diligent efforts of hospitals, health systems and medical professionals to prevent violence, health care workers remain five times more likely than any other type of worker to be physically attacked on the job.



This marked increase in workplace violence makes it more challenging for nurses and physicians to provide quality care to patients. When nurses and physicians fear for their safety, are distracted by disruptive behavior from patients or families, or are coping with trauma from previous incidents, their ability to focus on patient care diminishes. Violent incidents can delay critical care for other patients, lower employee productivity and heighten the risk of adverse outcomes.

Despite the prevalence of workplace violence and its detrimental impact on the health care system, there is no federal law specifically protecting health care workers from assault or intimidation. In contrast, federal laws do exist to criminalize assault and intimidation against airline employees.

Health care workers are more than 5 times likely to experience workplace violence than workers overall.

THE PROBLEM

Health care workers are five times more likely to experience workplace violence than workers overall. Workplace violence not only causes psychological impacts to health care workers, but it also results in injuries and illnesses requiring days away from work. Seventy-three percent of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses across all industries occur among health care workers.

Two out of three emergency department physicians reported being assaulted in 2022 and a quarter of those report being assaulted multiple times a week.

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THE SOLUTION:

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A CONGRESSIONAL SOLUTION

Congress should enact legislation such as the Save Healthcare Workers Act (H.R. 3178/S. 1600), which makes it a crime to assault hospital workers, similar to protections that exist for flight crews, flight attendants and airport workers.

Knowingly assaulting a health care employee and interfering with the performance of their duties should be made a federal crime, with an exception if the crime results from mental illness.

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