



**HB 452 – Healthcare Workplace Safety Act**  
**Sponsor Testimony**  
**Representative Andrea White & Representative Rachel Baker**

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Health Safety Committee, thank you for allowing us to come and testify on House Bill 452, legislation designed with health care professionals to help provide a framework for violence prevention and workplace safety plans, training and reporting standards across the state. Our goal: to better support our frontline health care workers who are so often serving our most wounded, traumatized and physically and mentally struggling citizens.

Throughout our communities, so many of our businesses continue to face an urgent workforce crisis—particularly in some of our most vital industry sectors including health care. As we begin to peel back the reasons driving these staffing shortages, one glaring fact demands our immediate attention—a steady increase in workplace violence.

Imagine, at 26 weeks pregnant, being slammed into a wall by a patient you’re trying to help in an emergency, or having to endure two surgeries and extensive therapy following a hand injury sustained by a violent patient that limits your ability to fully practice in the role you are most passionate about, or experiencing a vicious, unprovoked attack while serving in hospital security that results in permanent vision loss. These are just a few of the mounting stories we are hearing from our health care professionals as they attempt to fulfill their calling to help and to heal.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers in the health care and social service industries services experience the highest rates of injuries caused by workplace violence and are five times as likely to get injured at work than the overall workforce. Incidence rates of workplace violence against health care workers have increased nationally almost every year for more than a decade. Some recent survey data underscore these trends:

- A 2022 national survey of emergency physicians from the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) shows that violence in the emergency department (ED) has greatly increased – contributing to rising rates of health care worker burnout and harming patient care. An astounding 85% of emergency physicians believe the rate of violence experienced in EDs has increased over the past five years, with 45% indicating it has greatly increased. Additionally, two thirds of emergency physicians report being assaulted in the past year alone (66%) – with a third of these resulting in injury and more than a third disclosing they have been assaulted more than once.
- A 2021 survey of registered nurses from the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses found that 44% of RNs reported physical abuse and 68% reported verbal abuse during the first part of the pandemic (February and June 2020). This rise in threats as well as incidents of violence toward health care workers is not only causing injuries, distress and lost time from work, but also exacerbating burnout and leading them to leave positions of direct patient care at an alarming rate. Nearly a third of all nurses planned to leave their current job by the end of

2022- citing stress and burnout as the top reason for leaving according to a recent survey via the nurse hiring platform, Incredible Health.

We have introduced this legislation after input from multiple interested parties and stakeholders, including health care and law enforcement professionals. Since its strong passage in the House, we have made a few small modifications in the form of a sub bill to reduce regulatory burden, including simplifying how hospitals and health systems verify their compliance with the Department of Health, streamlining language and providing additional time for the Department of Higher Education to complete their survey and report on current training of health care professionals in these areas. It is our hope that this bill will be a major step toward reducing workplace violence and strengthening our health care environments so that these vital workers feel safe, supported, and valued for the tremendous impact they make day in and day out in our local communities. And ultimately, the Health Care Workplace Safety Act should in turn pay great dividends in helping to mitigate the crisis we are facing in recruiting and retaining our health care workforce.

I'll turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Rachel Baker, herself a long-time health care professional, to offer her testimony.

Thank you, Representative White, and I am honored to work with you to introduce this legislation that I know is a step in the right direction to supporting our healthcare workers.

As a longtime nurse, who continues to work in a hospital system, I have experienced firsthand the increasing violence occurring in healthcare settings. These instances of violence not only affect the healthcare providers' and nurses' safety, they also affect the providers' and nurses' mental health - with healthcare providers at an increased risk of suicide - and they affect healthcare workers' intention to continue working in a healthcare profession. These events have become so common that I have heard nurses and healthcare providers say that experiencing violence is "just part of the job." This is unacceptable and as a state it's critical that we work to support those providing direct care to patients, which is exactly what HB 452 aims to do.

This bill specifically does four things:

- First, it directs every hospital to establish an interdisciplinary team that includes direct care employees that will develop a plan for preventing workplace violence. There are several required components of the plans that are detailed in the bill. The plans must be reviewed and evaluated annually by the interdisciplinary team.
- Second, it requires that hospitals establish a workplace violence incident reporting system that is used to track incidents and make improvements in preventing workplace violence. The reporting system must include guidelines for when and how to report incidents to the employer, security agencies, and law enforcement and must include a policy stating there can be no discrimination or retaliation against people who report incidents.
- Third, it establishes the ability of hospital security personnel to receive access to online security training currently available to Ohio peace officers.
- Finally, it directs the Department of Higher Education to survey colleges and universities that provide education to students seeking to become health care providers, including medical students, nursing students, and allied health students, to evaluate the current education and training included in their curricula on the prevention of workplace violence. The results of this survey will be returned to the general assembly.

We need to create a safe working environment for the sustainability of healthcare delivery in Ohio. Through collaboration with many stakeholders - including the Emergency Physicians, Ohio Hospital Association, OSMA, Ohio Nurses Association, and Ohio Children's Hospitals - we believe that we developed a bill that all interested parties support and will be a positive step in creating safe work environments for our healthcare professionals. We're happy to continue improving the bill and are happy to make additional changes recommended by this committee.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you again for allowing us to testify. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.