



**Ohio Hospital Association and Ohio Children's Hospital Association  
Ohio Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee  
Proponent Testimony  
December 4, 2024**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Ohio Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Hospital Association and Ohio Children's Hospital Association thank you for the opportunity to share our support for Substitute House Bill 452.

First, we would like to express our appreciation to Representatives Baker and White for tackling this difficult, but critical issue. Their commitment to stakeholder engagement and input throughout the process has improved the legislation and we are pleased to partner with them.

The Ohio Children's Hospital Association is the voice of Ohio's youngest patients, their families and health care providers. OCHA is comprised of six member hospitals and their nearly 40,000 employees are dedicated to saving, protecting and enhancing children's lives. The Ohio Hospital Association represents the interests of 250 hospitals and 15 health systems. As the united voice of Ohio's hospitals, OHA leverages data and expertise to be the leader in influencing health policy, driving quality improvement initiatives and advocating for economic sustainability to serve our diverse membership. Our mission is to collaborate with member hospitals and health systems to ensure a healthy Ohio.

Each member of OCHA is a member of OHA and our associations work in tandem.

Workplace violence in hospitals and uncivil conduct directed at health care workers has increased in recent years and is unacceptable.

To show support to health care workers, and signal to patients, families and visitors that violence and other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated, OHA focused our efforts on accessing and providing violence prevention resources to member hospitals. A three-tiered approach was developed and presented to diverse member stakeholder groups throughout the year, and the work will continue beyond this initial process. We convened a series of conversations with various hospital constituency groups to develop a set of principles that all Ohio hospitals are encouraged to adopt within their own codes of conduct.

OHA brought forth and proposed a statewide united Code of Conduct focusing on core principles as a united front. The principles were vetted by the OHA Workforce Task Force, a violence subcommittee of the OHA Workforce Task Force, the Ohio Organization for Nursing Leadership board of directors, OHA's Clinical Advisory Committee, OHA's Institute for Health Innovation board of directors and OHA's Physician Leadership Advisory Council, all of whom enthusiastically encouraged hospitals to adopt these principles.

The OHA Board of Trustees, which includes representation from OCHA, ultimately approved a united set of common principles that OHA member organizations were asked to adopt as part of their patient and visitor code of conduct.

The principles for promotion of a safe and respectful environment include:

- Health care organization's commitment to uphold a code of conduct to maintain a safe, inclusive, equitable and respectful environment for patients, staff and visitors.
- Health care organization's commitment to create policies and practices that promote the protection of staff, patients and visitors.
- A safe environment promotes patient, visitor and staff safety.
- Violent, offensive, abusive or discriminatory language or behavior undermine the safety of patients and staff.

Flexibility is an important piece of the puzzle when crafting policies because OHA represents a diverse membership with unique needs and challenges. To that end, the code of conduct affords organizations the ability to alter the language and include additional items as appropriate for their individual organizations but agree to uphold the general principles above as a united, baseline standard.

OHA and OCHA recognize and appreciate that Sub. HB 452 allows for some measure of hospital and health system flexibility when developing the criteria for the hospital security plan because it permits the team that develops the plans to specify other data points to be included in a hospital's security risk assessment. Additionally, the amended bill gives discretion to hospitals in the wording of required signage.

Beyond promoting the Code of Conduct, OHA continues to collect educational tools for our member hospitals to use in developing their hospital violence program. In addition to providing resources to our members, OHA has established a new membership committee, the Safety Council, to bring members together to discuss effective practices and resources to address worker and patient safety.

The OHA Safety Council provides a forum for Ohio hospitals to focus upon safety issues related to hospital and health care workers and patients. Council responsibilities include the sharing of effective practices, receiving pertinent and timely updates regarding patient and worker safety issues, leveraging data to identify areas of focus and opportunity as it pertains to patient and worker safety and providing resources and opportunities for members to learn about and develop their understanding of patient and worker safety issues.

Finally, OHA is also actively participating in the American Hospital Association's national awareness campaign –Hospitals Against Violence #HAVhope.

Hospitals Against Violence (HAV)'s work is guided by the Building a Safe Workplace and Community Framework, which identifies four essential domains that hospital and health system leaders should consider as they address issues of violence in their workplaces. These include risk mitigation, trauma support, culture of safety and violence intervention.

The HAV initiative exists to share examples and best practices with the field about workplace and community violence. By enhancing public awareness via our #HAVHope social media campaign, developing tools and resources and sharing the best practices of our member hospitals and health systems with the field, HAV supports AHA members in addressing all types of workplace violence and community violence in their organizations and in their communities.

Again, we appreciate the bill sponsors' willingness to include our members' input and feedback throughout the legislative process. We believe it is an important step forward in accomplishing our shared goal to protect the health and wellbeing of our dedicated workforce.

Chairman Johnson and members of the committee, thank you for your time and consideration.