



## Ohio State Council

Senate Veteran and Public Safety Committee

Jeannie Burnie, MS, APRN, AGCNS-BC, CEN, FAEN, FCNS- President- Elect Ohio Emergency Nurses Association - House Bill 452 Proponent

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 452. My name is Jeannie Burnie, I am writing on behalf of the Ohio Emergency Nurses Association representing 167,000 emergency nurses. I am the president-elect for the Ohio State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association. I am a Clinical Nurse Specialist of an emergency department service line in southwest Ohio.

Nurses across the state of Ohio come to work every day with a commitment to help others. No one should have to face the threat of being yelled at, spit upon, struck or even worse, becoming the victim of a violent act such as a gunshot or stab wound. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many emergency nurses across the state. Incidents of workplace violence occur in urban, suburban, and rural settings, leaving no nurse immune to the risks. According to the Emergency Nurses Association, over 70% of emergency nurses admit to being hit or kicked on the job. This violence not only harms the health and well-being of the nurse but also impacts the quality of care they deliver. The Emergency Nurses Association and American College of Emergency Physicians continue to lead the charge in raising awareness and advocating for solutions to this critical safety concern.

The physical and emotional trauma of workplace violence is driving emergency nurses out of the profession. A 2022 survey, conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated workplace violence, revealed that 33% of nurses reported leaving the profession. The full impact of workplace violence remains unclear, as many incidents go unreported. Nurses often choose not to report incidents because they feel unsupported by their employers or believe that no action will be taken against the perpetrator. Even more alarming is the perception among many nurses that workplace violence is just a part of their job. Physical violence, intimidation, and threats are unacceptable in the workplace, and they should never be tolerated in the health care setting.

As an emergency department nurse with nearly 40 years of experience, I have been a victim of verbal and physical assault. Over the years, I have worked with nurses who have been punched in the face, spit on, had blood and body fluids thrown at them, kicked in the stomach and knocked to the ground. Fortunately, the organization I work for has a process in place to support nurses who choose to press charges. However, many nurses are not so fortunate. The passage of House Bill 452 would help ensure that all organizations develop processes to support health care providers who experience workplace violence.



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The reporting system proposed by House Bill 452 will require organizations to track workplace violence incidents, including reports made to law enforcement and hospital police departments, as well as the number of individuals involved in these incidents who are criminally charged. This initiative will increase awareness of the prevalence of workplace violence and its impact on the delivery of care in the emergency department.

House Bill 452 mandates that each hospital system, as well as hospitals not affiliated with a system, establish a security plan for reporting workplace violence. There are concerns regarding the need for effective de-escalation strategies for individuals experiencing mental health crises. Emergency nurses are dedicated to providing safe care to all patients and are required to undergo training to enhance their de-escalation skills. While the legislation does not require all incidents of workplace violence to be reported to law enforcement, it does stipulate that hospitals must be aware of and track incidents within their organization.

Emergency departments should be safe spaces where patients and their families can be guaranteed compassionate, quality care, and where the nursing team is supported in a work environment free of violence. House Bill 452 aims to address this by providing hospital personnel with access to online security training that is currently available to Ohio peace officers. Additionally, the bill will direct the Department of Higher Education to survey colleges and universities to evaluate current curriculum and incorporate education and training on workplace violence- training that is currently absent in nursing schools. As a Clinical Nurse Specialist in a metropolitan area of southwest Ohio, I often hear from new graduate nurses that our workplace violence training is the first time that the critical issue is addressed in their education.

House Bill 452 advocates for hospital violence prevention measures to create a safe environment for patients, which will also greatly benefit nurses working in the emergency department. Please join the Ohio Emergency Nurses Association in supporting this important legislation. The Ohio Emergency Nurses Association urges you to support this vital legislation and vote yes in support of House Bill 452.

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