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**Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee
In Support of HB2023
March 24, 2023**

Chair Warren and Committee Members:

Our associations support HB2023. The persistence of acts of violence and disturbances occurring within medical facilities, especially in emergency rooms is troubling. These acts not only endanger the health care workers, but they also endanger the ability to provide medical care to numerous patients awaiting the attention of the health care workers. Our health care workers are under significant stress as it is, without having to deal with people physically attacking them and physically interfering with their ability to provide medical care to the sick and injured. Our entire health care system is under significant stress now due to staffing shortages. According to the *United States Registered Nurse Workforce Report Card and Shortage Forecast* published in the *American Journal of Medical Quality*, a shortage of registered nurses is projected to spread across the country through 2030.

We believe the approach to these crimes presented in HB2023 is reasonable and will send a clear message to the people who act out against health care workers. HB2023 is the same as was amended and passed in this committee last year with only a single recorded no vote.

The bill will create a new crime of interference with the conduct of a hospital, including an aggravated crime when the offender is in possession of a weapon. This is consistent with existing statutes for interference with the conduct of public business in public buildings and aggravated interference with the conduct of public business (KSA 21-5922).

In addition, it enhances the penalty for misdemeanor battery of a health care worker from a class B misdemeanor to a class A misdemeanor. This is the equivalent of the enhancement for battery to a school employee.

We urge you to move this bill forward favorably.

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