



TO: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Elijah Thompson, Director of Physical Security, Saint Luke's Health System

DATE: March 24, 2023

RE: Proponent of House Bill 2023

On behalf of Saint Luke's Health System, a faith-based, not-for-profit, and its over 12,000 employees, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2023, which concerns interference with a hospital worker.

Saint Luke's Health System currently has hospitals in south Overland Park, Iola, Garnett along with Community Hospitals in Leawood, Roeland Park, and Kansas City, Kansas. Saint Luke's South Hospital has 162 beds, our hospitals in Iola and Garnett have 25 beds each, and the Community Hospitals have 8 inpatient beds each. The passage of House Bill 2023 is incredibly important because, as you are aware, workplace violence events continue to become more prevalent in hospital and healthcare environments.

This Bill would increase criminal penalties for the intentional assault of healthcare workers, interference with the conduct of a hospital, which would be a significant help for Kansas hospitals seeking to provide the best possible care. Passing this Bill would send a strong message to potential instigators that violence against healthcare workers and interrupting healthcare services is not tolerated anywhere, especially in the State of Kansas. Also of importance, passage of this Bill would signal support for hospital workers across our state who encounter violence in the workplace far too often.

This Bill would close gaps in the realm where those with malintent often operate. At times, those who create intentional disturbances in hospitals disrupt the environment and the ability of care providers to attend to other patients. At times, when law enforcement is called, they are reluctant to utilize other current statutes as the perpetrator's actions may not clearly match the elements of current crimes and the perpetrators know this. At other times, individual hospital workers may be reluctant to sign a complaint as the victim, due to fear of reprisal, and the organization cannot sign as the victim for many charges. This Bill clarifies that those disrupting, impairing, interfering with, or obstructing the mission, processes, procedures, or functions of the hospital could be charged criminally. This Bill also clearly outlines that the person charged with maintaining order of that hospital environment may sign the complaint, taking some of the burden off front line staff. In essence, this allows care team members to focus upon patient care, while allowing organizations to mitigate future recurrences by pursuing criminal charges with the appropriate hospital representative signing as the complainant.

It is not uncommon that some individuals will intentionally scream, yell, and create significant disruptions in hospitals when they do not get what they want. When this occurs, I have seen behavior escalate resulting in the assault of the attending care provider. I have seen team members attacked with feces, urine, hands, fists, equipment, and other items. I am confident that this Bill, if passed into law and used appropriately, and if charges are filed by prosecutors, will have a positive impact on hospital settings and the quality of care provided to all citizens in the State of Kansas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Thompson", is written over the signature line.

Elijah Thompson
Director of Physical Security
Saint Luke's Health System

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