



THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS HEALTH SYSTEM

Reagan Cussimano
Director of Government Affairs

To: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Reagan Cussimano, Director of Government Affairs
The University of Kansas Health System

Date: March 24, 2023

Re: House Bill 2023 - Creating the crime of interference with the conduct of a
healthcare facility

Chairwoman Warren, Vice Chair Wilborn and Ranking Minority Member Corson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2023. The University of Kansas Health System provides care across the state of Kansas through our campuses located in Kansas City, St. Francis – Topeka and Great Bend.

Violence in the healthcare setting is not a novel issue and one we have dealt with internally for years. Despite those efforts to protect our employees, violence within the healthcare setting has continued to increase. In our Kansas City Division, there have been 292 physical assaults reported year-to-date for FY 23. In FY 2022 we experienced a total of 353 reported assaults. As you can see, we are clearly on a path to exceed FY 2022. We are asking the Kansas Legislature to aid us in protecting our staff and ensure we can offer a robust support system in these horrific situations.

HB 2023 will allow our hospital to step in and file charges on behalf of our staff, something we currently are unable to do. Currently, this must be done by the staff who experience the assault. While this does happen on some occasions, there are many times an employee is suffering from trauma related to the attack and cannot manage the process of filing charges and subsequent legal processes involved. As a system we want to support our employees and provide the assistance they seek in these situations.

Workplace violence is also a workforce issue. Staff experience everything from minor scrapes and bites to concussions and physical injuries requiring surgery. When these major incidents occur, our staff justifiably step away from the bedside for physical recovery and for their mental health and wellbeing. Depending on the nature of the injury, staff may leave the healthcare setting completely or choose to move to a position they believe will reduce or eliminate the risk of assault.

In 2022, HB 2620 was amended into SB 286 and passed both Chambers. Thank you for recognizing the importance of this issue then. We sincerely hope you see the value in moving this issue forward again.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Should there be questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at rcussimano@kumc.edu.