



TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Stephanie Wise, MBA, BSN, RN, NEA-BC
Chief Nursing Officer
AdventHealth Shawnee Mission

DATE: February 10, 2022

RE: HB 2620

On behalf of **AdventHealth Shawnee Mission**, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today in **support of HB 2620**.

Since 1962, we're proud to extend our healing mission. As the largest provider of health care in Johnson County, we have 504 hospital beds on our Shawnee Mission campus with 1300 nurses and are recognized with the highest level of nursing achievement, Magnet status. We serve the greater Kansas City metro and beyond and 80 percent of our patients are from Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

We're in a health care staffing crisis in this country. It's critical we explore and develop initiatives that not only create a pipeline to health care careers and attract health care professionals to Kansas, but also retain the current workforce.

Staffing shortages and increasing violence were challenges for health care pre-pandemic but have been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Workplace violence in hospitals is a contributing factor to stress and burnout for our nurses.

We must support ways to combat workplace violence, which is unfortunately a significant issue for hospitals. This includes verbal and physical abuse by patients or family members that may cause injury and mental trauma. According to the [American Nursing Association](#), 1 in 4 nurses are assaulted at work.

Unlike other professions or places of business, federal law (EMTALA) requires hospitals to treat all who walk through our Emergency Department doors but acts of violence can interfere with critical emergency services. We're committed to supporting our team members and providing them the resources they need to give the highest quality of care to our patients. We invest heavily in increased training, pay, signage, policies, and procedures to protect our caregivers and patients.

In 2021, our Shawnee Mission campus experienced an average of nine incidents per month resulting in injury to our staff. Let me be clear: this violence is intentional and not the result of a medical condition.

Specifically, in 2021 alone, our staff members were victims of punching, kicking, choking, biting, headbutting, spitting, forceful grabbing and sometimes concussions.

Our hospital Safety & Security Committee carefully tracks these incidents and we have implemented procedures to mitigate and respond to them. Additionally, AdventHealth is proud to provide free confidential counseling sessions to staff.

AdventHealth is part of the Kansas City Workplace Violence Collaborative, a group of KC metro hospitals sharing best practices and working with law enforcement to implement policies and procedures to mitigate workplace violence.

House Bill 2620 would increase penalties for battery against a hospital healthcare provider and create a crime of interference of emergency services at a hospital similar to current interference law.

We support this legislation to reach our goal to increase penalties which will hopefully be a deterrent, increase awareness, reporting and support for our staff. We will have better reporting if those attackers with intent are held accountable.

This is a national problem and many states have taken similar action to increase penalties. We hope Kansas will consider doing the same by supporting this legislation.

Throughout the pandemic, we've been thankful for your support of our health care workforce. We ask for continued support and for not tolerating violence.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and we hope the committee will support this bill for passage. Thank you for your service to our state.