



February 10, 2022

Chairman Patton and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and our more than 43,000 members worldwide, including nearly 350 members in Kansas, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 2620. This legislation strengthens the penalty for assault and battery on emergency nurses and other healthcare professionals. In so doing, this bill would help address the elevated risk of violence faced by emergency nurses and other healthcare professionals across Kansas by increasing the penalties for assaulting such individuals.

As you know, under federal law, emergency departments (EDs) are required to treat any patient seeking care without regard to insurance status or ability to pay. However, this duty should not be accepted at the expense of the safety of patients receiving treatment and professionals who are providing it. Every day, emergency nurses across the country are punched, bitten, spit on, slapped, grabbed, kicked, and sometimes worse, yet rarely are these assaults reported. On average, healthcare professionals in the ED experience a violent event every two months, and registered nurses in the ED are more likely to experience acute stress, according to the American Journal of Emergency Medicine.

Emergency nurses and other personnel in the ED experience violence at much higher rates than other workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found that between 2002 and 2013, incidents of serious workplace violence were four times more common for healthcare workers than other private sector workers. Reports of violence toward healthcare workers have drastically increased with the pandemic.

In a 2016 report, the Government Accountability Office identified workplace violence as a “serious concern” in healthcare, and it is critical that those who face a substantial risk of violence, like emergency nurses, be adequately protected under the law. Your legislation will help ensure that violence against emergency nurses and other healthcare professionals is not ignored. We must protect those who dedicate themselves to saving lives in our communities.

Thank you for your leadership on this important legislation that will help protect Kansas healthcare professionals, including emergency nurses. Should you have any questions regarding emergency nursing or the Kansas Emergency Nurses Association, you may contact Teresa Taylor at 785-231-4363.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Teresa Taylor".

Teresa Taylor, BSN, RN, CEN, TCRN
Kansas Emergency Nurses Association Government Affairs Chairperson