

Ref: HB 1121

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

It comes with great urgency that I implore you to recommend House Bill 1121 and report favorably for final passage.

Workplace violence within healthcare has become a nationwide problem; and our state's healthcare systems are not immune from such events. Healthcare workers have been facing verbal and physical abuse from the people they serve for years, with little to no legislation to support the healthcare worker after experiencing an assault.

As a healthcare security professional leading teams who protect those who care for our patients, in my opinion it is imperative to curb the increasing rates of workplace violence against healthcare workers. Here at Altru Health System, we have seen rates of workplace violence continue to increase from 2021, through 2022.

In 2021, there were 315 reported physical or verbal incidents of workplace violence by patients or visitors of the health system against healthcare workers. 102 of those incidents, 32%, were physical assaults against healthcare workers and 27 of those resulted in physical injury.

In 2022, there were 399 reported physical or verbal incidents of workplace violence by patients or visitors of the health system against healthcare workers. 137 of those incidents, 34%, were physical assaults against healthcare workers and 48 of those resulted in physical injury, double from the year prior.

Many of the physical assaults referenced and recorded were not just patients swatting at arms of nurses, but rather were nose breaking, urine and feces throwing, bites breaking the skin, and concussion giving levels of assault. These are the types of assaults that are causing healthcare workers to reconsider their decisions to work within healthcare. In fact, in 2022, 10 of the 48 reported injuries due to workplace violence were severe enough to result in Workforce Safety Insurance claims.

Additionally, there were 13 blood/bodily fluid exposures in 2022 that were associated to workplace violence, and cost the organization over \$13,000.

Violence should not be tolerated in any setting, but especially within a setting meant to heal and care for patients. Increasing violence against healthcare workers may increase the labor shortage in nursing related fields. Current legislation does not deter this behavior from occurring; there is not a severe enough punishment for the offender. Increasing violence and injuries lead to increased costs to employers, and insurance companies.

It is time to protect those who protect others. It is time to enhance the existing legislation to protect all healthcare workers in all healthcare settings.

Respectfully,



**Daniel Hunnisett, CHSS**

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Pronouns: he, him, his

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## Workplace Violence Statistics - Introduction

OSHA defines workplace violence as: Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide.

Workplace violence can be categorized into 4 types:

<b>Type 1: Criminal Intent</b>	<b>Type 2: Customer/Client</b>	<b>Type 3: Worker-to-Worker</b>	<b>Type 4: Domestic Violence</b>
Criminal intent workplace violence incidents is when the perpetrator has no relationship with the targeted establishment and the primary motive is theft. This type is generally a robbery, shoplifting or trespassing incident that turns violent. The biggest targets of criminal intent violence are workers who exchange cash, work late hours or work alone. In health care settings Type 1 violence occurs less frequently compared to other types of violence.	During a customer/client workplace violence incident, the perpetrator is a customer or client of the employer and the violence often occurs in conjunction with the worker's normal duties. The occupations with the highest risk for customer/client violence are healthcare and social service workers whom are four times more likely to be a victim than the average private sector employee, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.	This type of workplace violence incident is generally perpetrated by a current or former employee, and the motivating factor is often interpersonal or work-related conflicts, or losses and traumas. The group highest at risk for this type of workplace violence incident is managers and supervisors.	Domestic violence in the workplace oftentimes is perpetrated by someone who is not an employee or a former employee. This type of incident is frequent because the abuser knows exactly where his/her spouse will be during work hours. Women are targeted much more frequently than men, and the risk of violence increases when one party attempts to separate from the other.

We also classified the workplace violence event by the means that the individual used committing an act of workplace violence, or the interventions used by staff:

<b>Verbal/Verbal Direction</b>	<b>Physical/Physical Intervention</b>	<b>Assault</b>
Verbal abuse or verbal threats used against an individual.  Staff may have used verbal direction as an intervention.	An individual may have used physical intimidation or other actions that may not have reached the level of assault. This action is outside of the medical process.  Staff may have used physical intervention measures to prevent situation escalating.	The act of an assault used against an individual.

## 2021 Workplace Violence Statistics - Yearly Overview

		OSHA WPV TYPE				
<u>2021 TOTAL</u>		<u>1-Criminal Intent</u>	<u>2-Customer/Client</u>	<u>3-Worker to Worker</u>	<u>4-Domestic Violence</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
<b><u>Incident Type</u></b>	<b><u>Verbal Direction</u></b>	2	129	1	6	138
	<b><u>Physical Intervention</u></b>	0	84	0	2	86
	<b><u>Assault</u></b>	0	102	0	4	106
	<b><u>TOTALS</u></b>	2	315	1	12	330

**Injuries Due To Workplace Violence:**                      27

## 2022 Workplace Violence Statistics - Yearly Overview

		OSHA WPV TYPE				
<u>2022 TOTAL</u>		<u>1-Criminal Intent</u>	<u>2-Customer/Client</u>	<u>3-Worker to Worker</u>	<u>4-Domestic Violence</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
<b><u>Incident Type</u></b>	<b><u>Verbal Direction</u></b>	6	121	2	5	134
	<b><u>Physical Intervention</u></b>	1	141	1	0	143
	<b><u>Assault</u></b>	1	137	0	6	144
	<b><u>TOTALS</u></b>	8	399	3	11	421

**Injuries Due To Workplace Violence:**                      48