

Save Healthcare Workers Act

Introduced by Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and Angus King (I-Maine) and Representatives Madeleine Dean (D-Pa.-04) and Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa-01)

Workplace violence against health care workers is a national crisis. Over the past five years, incidents of violence against health care workers have skyrocketed, as incivility and violent acts in our society spill into hospitals. Violence in health care has implications far beyond the injuries sustained by its workforce. Workplace violence creates a difficult environment for nurses to care for patients. Health care workers cannot provide attentive care when they are afraid for their personal safety, distracted by disruptive patients or family members, or traumatized from prior attacks.

Protecting our health care workers must be a national priority. Hospitals and health systems have bolstered security measures, training programs and policies to ensure the safety of health care workers and patients. According to a new American Hospital Association report, prepared by the University of Washington Harborview Injury and Prevention Research Center, the financial cost of violence to hospitals in 2023 was estimated at \$18.27 billion. These costs include health care treatment for victims, security staffing for health care facilities and violence prevention programs/training, among other costs. Despite prevention efforts, health care and social service workers are five times more likely than any other type of worker to be physically attacked on the job, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. No one should have to fear for their safety while at work, especially when their job is saving lives and caring for patients.

Despite the proliferation of workplace violence and its effect on our health care system, health care workers do not experience the same federal protections as aircraft and airport workers. Passage of the Save Healthcare Workers Act would serve as a significant deterrent to violence in hospitals and a crucial step in protecting health care workers' safety.

The Save Healthcare Workers Act would:

- Establish federal criminal penalties of up to 10 years for knowingly assaulting health care workers on hospital property.
- Exempt individuals with mental, physical and developmental disabilities from being prosecuted
- Study the law's effectiveness and impact on prosecutions.
- Define protected settings as all personnel in hospitals, long-term care hospitals, children's hospitals, critical access hospitals and others as defined under the Social Security Act.

House Bill Only: Includes grant funding for hospital violence prevention resources and training, such as de-escalation, crisis response, access control, surveillance, panic alert systems and infrastructure upgrades.