



2401 Gillham Road  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108  
(816) 234-3000

**To: House Committee on Judiciary**

**From: Stephanie Meyer, RN, MS-FNP, NEA-BC  
Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer  
Children's Mercy Hospital-Kansas City**

**Date: January 20, 2023**

**Re: Written Proponent Testimony on HB 2023**

Dear Chairman Patton, Vice Chairman Schreiber, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Children's Mercy Hospital, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 2023, which would create the crime of interference with the conduct of a hospital and increase the criminal penalties for battery of a healthcare provider who is employed by a hospital.

Children's Mercy Hospital is a leading independent children's health organization dedicated to holistic care, translational research, breakthrough innovation, and educating the next generation of caregivers. For over 125 years, we have provided world-class pediatric care to the children of Kansas City and our region. We are ranked as one of the best children's hospitals in America by U.S. News and World Report, ranking in all 10 specialties.

Our 8,000 employees show up to work every day to create a world of wellbeing for children. For our providers, the past few years have been some of the most trying of their lives. While enduring staffing shortages, supply disruptions, and a pandemic, our frontline workers have also faced a frightening increase in workplace violence. Nationally, 1 in 4 nurses has been assaulted at work, according to the American Nurses Association. The threat of violence and injury from those visiting our hospital affects our staff and their ability to provide world-class care.

The threat of violence also makes it more difficult to retain and attract providers during a time when the healthcare industry is already struggling with a staffing crisis. According to the Kansas Board of Regents, resident student enrollment in health profession fields has decreased nearly 30 percent over the past decade. If we want to attract the next generation of nurses and doctors to care for our children and grandchildren, we must be able to ensure that our legal system protects them.

Children's Mercy Hospital, unlike other workplaces, is required by the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) to treat everyone who arrives at our Emergency Room. We must deliver lifesaving care no matter the circumstance, but the threat of violence and assault limits our ability to provide emergency services. Our providers have survived horrendous attacks. We provide counseling and other mental health services to staff who have experienced this trauma, but we ask this Committee to consider helping our heroic providers through the force of law. They deserve our strongest and most rigorous protection.

HB 2023, among other things, increases penalties for battery against a healthcare provider. The bill would act as a necessary deterrent for those who inflict harm on our frontline workers. And since less than half of all workplace violence incidents go unreported, this bill would assure our providers the proper legal protections are in place for them to safely report acts of violence.



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Children's Mercy thanks the Legislature and this Committee for your work to maintain a pipeline of future healthcare providers and ensure the safety of our current ones. They have all given so much these past few years. Those providers deserve to feel safe and have legal recourse when harmed.

Thank you for considering our proponent testimony,

Stephanie Meyer  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Children's Mercy Hospital-Kansas City