

A safe environment is key to quality patient care!

SB 1237 - An Act Requiring Health Care Employers to Develop and Implement Programs to Prevent Workplace Violence (Sen. James Timility/Rep. Michael Brady)

A hospital should be a haven where patients go to heal and nurses and other health care professionals provide care in a safe environment. Unfortunately, hospitals are increasingly violent workplaces, both for employees and for patients. Violence against nurses and other health care workers, which can range from verbal and emotional abuse to physical assault and homicide, is not uncommon in hospitals and other health care settings.

The statistics are sobering:

- 48% of all non-fatal assaults in the U.S. workplace are committed by health care patients.¹
- Nurses and other personal care workers suffer violent assaults at a rate 12 times higher than other industries.²
- In a 2004 survey of Massachusetts nurses, 50% indicated they had been punched at least once in the last two years.³ A 2009 study by the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) found that more than half of emergency nurses report experiencing physical violence on the job. One in four has experienced such violence more than 20 times in the past three years.⁴

What can you do to help?

Right now, the implementation of a procedure to prevent workplace violence in hospitals is completely dependent on the administration of each individual facility. Some hospitals are very aggressive in trying to prevent violence against nurses and other workers, while other hospitals are not.

SB 1237 would require:

- Health care employers to perform annual risk assessments and identify factors which may put employees at risk of workplace violence
- These employers to develop and implement plans to minimize the risks identified
- Annual evaluations to assess the plans and make necessary adjustments



¹"Violence in the Workplace 1997," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, www.cdc.gov/niosh/violfs.html

²"Guidelines for Preventing Workplace violence for Health Care & Social Service Workers," U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA 3148-01R 2004, www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3148.pdf

³"Protecting our Caregivers from Workplace Violence," Norfolk District Attorney's Office, 2007, p. 8 4 Violence Against Nurses Working in U.S. Emergency Departments, Journal of Nursing Administration, July/August issue, 2009

⁴Violence Against Nurses Working in U.S. Emergency Departments, Journal of Nursing Administration, July/August issue, 2009