



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
Monday, March 13, 2023**

**HB 6741, An Act Improving The Safety Of Health Care Providers And Patients**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6741, An Act Improving The Safety Of Health Care Providers And Patients**. CHA supports the goals of the bill, and suggests some modest revisions.

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

Healthcare workers are uniquely and disproportionately at risk of workplace violence. Citing an April 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics Fact Sheet, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) noted that healthcare workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illness due to violence in 2018. More troubling is that the percentage has been steadily increasing for at least the past 10 years.<sup>1</sup> The number of workplace violence incidents reported by hospitals to the Department of Public Health (DPH) in 2021 increased by 28% over the number reported in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Regulatory agencies such as CMS and DPH and accrediting bodies such as The Joint Commission have established and enforce the regulatory expectation that patients and staff will have an environment that prioritizes their safety to ensure effective delivery of healthcare.

Connecticut hospitals are and have been focused on providing a safe setting for all persons. They established workplace safety committees including management and staff to conduct risk assessments, develop a plan, and meet regularly to implement and modify the plan as

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Memorandum dated November 28, 2022, Ref: QSO-23-04-Hospitals.

<sup>2</sup> Each licensed healthcare facility is obligated to report annually to DPH the number and location of workplace violence incidents, per Connecticut General Statutes Section 19a-490r.

required.<sup>3</sup> They are identifying patients at risk for intentional harm to themselves or others and taking steps to mitigate this risk. They are recognizing environmental safety risks for patients and staff and making changes to reduce the occurrence of incidents. They are providing ongoing education and training to staff and volunteers on crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques and approaches to ensuring personal safety.

HB 6741 includes several measures intended to assist hospitals and other healthcare providers in their efforts to increase the safety of providers, visitors, and patients. In Section 1, CHA supports the development of a marketing campaign by DPH discouraging the mistreatment of healthcare providers and encouraging civility in healthcare settings. Such a campaign will amplify and highlight current efforts within hospitals to achieve the same goal.

Section 2 provides for the establishment of a hospital security grant program to be administered by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) for securing hospital entrances and public spaces or for other measures to ensure the safety of hospital healthcare providers, hospital staff, and patients. Since the advent of workplace violence reporting in 2015, 82% of incidents reported have occurred in emergency departments, on medical/surgical floors, and in inpatient behavioral health units. Hospitals are focusing their efforts to improve safety in these areas. CHA asks that the Committee align the scope of this new OPM grant program by revising the following sentence:

Grants shall be made to hospitals to ensure the safety of health care providers, hospital staff, and patients in all areas of the hospital, including, but not limited to securing hospital entrances through interior and exterior physical and technological improvements.

Section 3 would permit, but not require, hospitals to establish policies and procedures related to healthcare provider, staff, and patient safety that govern when a hospital may require a patient receiving nonemergency healthcare to leave the hospital when such patient's behavior or conduct constitutes a threat to the safety of a healthcare provider, staff member, or other patient. Such a measure may help hospitals to supplement existing remedies, including, but not limited to the engagement of local law enforcement authorities.

Passing HB 6741 with the modest revision suggested above will be another positive step toward making hospitals safer for all.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.

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<sup>3</sup> Medicare Hospital Conditions of Participation (CoPs) at Section 482.13(c) and Connecticut General Statutes Section 19a-490q.