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Every physician matters, each patient counts.

June 5, 2026

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The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Rodrigues,

On behalf of the over 22,000 physician, resident, and student members of the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS), we thank you and the members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for your continued work addressing the critical issue of workplace violence in health care settings. The MMS condemns all forms of violence against the physicians and health care workers who provide medical services. Accordingly, we support H.4767 and S.1718, *An Act Requiring Health Care Employers to Develop and Implement Programs to Prevent Workplace Violence*.

Unfortunately, workplace violence has become an increasingly common reality across health care settings in the Commonwealth. Physicians and other members of the health care team routinely face verbal threats, intimidation, and physical assault while providing care to patients. Medical personnel should not have to fear for their safety while fulfilling their professional obligations to care for others.

Physicians and other health care workers face disproportionately high rates of workplace violence compared to workers in most other industries.¹ The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has identified workplace violence as a recognized hazard in the health care industry, with heightened risks in emergency departments, psychiatric and behavioral health settings, and other high-acuity care environments.²

The consequences of workplace violence extend far beyond the immediate physical and emotional harm experienced by physicians and other health care workers. Violence, threats, and intimidation can undermine the clinical environment, contribute to workforce burnout and turnover, and make it more difficult for health care professionals to provide the attentive, high-quality care that patients deserve. When physicians and other members of the care team are concerned for their personal safety, distracted by disruptive or threatening behavior, or coping with the effects of prior incidents, patient care may be adversely affected. Protecting health care workers is therefore not only

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¹ Lim MC, Jeffree MS, Saupin SS, Giloi N, Lukman KA. Workplace violence in healthcare settings: The risk factors, implications and collaborative preventive measures. *Ann Med Surg (Lond)*. 2022 May 13;78:103727. doi: 10.1016/j.amsu.2022.103727. PMID: 35734684; PMCID: PMC9206999.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9206999/>

²U.S. Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Workplace Violence. Health Care. <https://www.osha.gov/healthcare/workplace-violence>

a workforce issue, but also an important component of ensuring patient safety, quality of care, and a stable health care delivery system.

In recent years, workplace violence has emerged as an increasingly serious challenge throughout the health care system, with no indication these trends are abating. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, rates of violence-related injuries in health care settings rose significantly (30%) between 2011 and 2021/2022.³ Many studies and reports also suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges, with health care professionals reporting increases in threats, harassment, intimidation, and aggressive behavior.⁴

This legislation represents a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to addressing the growing healthcare workplace violence crisis. H.4767 and S.1718 appropriately focus on prevention, staff training, incident reporting, post-incident response, and meaningful protections for health care workers who experience violence in the workplace. These measures will help create safer clinical environments while promoting accountability and continuous quality improvement.

Ensuring a safe workplace is essential to maintaining a stable and effective health care system for patients across Massachusetts. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to report this legislation favorably.

Thank you for your consideration of your comments. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Rebecca W. Brendel, MD, JD

³ Lombardi B, Jensen T, Galloway E, Fraher E. Trends in workplace violence for health care occupations and facilities over the last 10 years. *Health Aff Sch.* 2024 Oct 23;2(12):qxae134. doi: 10.1093/haschl/qxae134. PMID: 39664482; PMCID: PMC11630250. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11630250/>

⁴ Ibid.