



December 15, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Larry Bucshon
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Madeleine Dean
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Manchin and Rubio and Representatives Bucshon and Dean:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I write to offer our support for the Safety from Violence for Healthcare Employees (SAVE) Act, H.R. 2584/S.2768. ACP has great concern for the safety of all health care personnel and patients, including the workplace violence currently faced by physicians and other health care workers. We appreciate your leadership and commitment to ensuring that they can effectively care for their patients in a safe environment, free from violence.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 161,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, and compassion to the preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

We believe that physicians and other health care workers have a right to deliver care under conditions that do not impair their health and well-being. Furthermore, the College [supports](#) reducing and preventing instances of workplace violence, and bolstering workplace safety. Currently, there is no federal law that protects hospital employees from assault and intimidation. H.R. 2584/S.2768 would change that by establishing criminal penalties to individuals who knowingly assault or intimidate hospital employees or hospital contractors. This approach is modeled after current protections for aircraft and airport workers. The legislation includes enhanced penalties for the use of a dangerous weapon that results in injury and has exceptions for individuals who may be mentally incapacitated due to illness or substance use.

In particular, the College supports provisions in *Part PP* of H.R. 2584, *the Grant Program for Hospital Workforce Safety and Security*, which would authorize \$25 million in grant funding for 10 fiscal years to hospitals to reduce violence and intimidation. Funds could be used for

training, law enforcement coordination, and technology improvement efforts. ACP believes physicians and other health care workers should educate themselves on workplace violence policies, plans, and protocols; be aware of potential hazards; report all incidents of workplace violence; participate in workplace violence prevention and response trainings; and commit to upholding a culture of workplace safety.

ACP's physician members and other health care professionals face a growing number of threats, intimidation, and harassment in the workplace. [According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the incidence rate of nonfatal violence to health care workers grew from 6.4 incidences per 10,000 full time workers in 2011 to 10.4 incidences per 10,000 workers in 2018. Health care and social service industry professionals are five times more likely to be injured from workplace violence than workers in other industries. During the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), many physicians, scientists, and public health officials experienced harassment by anti-vaccination groups and political extremists because of mask requirements, quarantines, and other policies implemented. In Idaho, anti-vaccination groups and other protesters [harassed](#) members of a county health board (including a family physician) at their homes. In one instance, California State Senator Richard Pan, a pediatrician and vaccine proponent, [was assaulted](#) by an anti-vaccine activist who live-streamed the incident on Facebook.

A [research study](#) found that about one-quarter of physicians surveyed have experienced online harassment for a variety of reasons, including their recommendations regarding vaccines; one physician [said](#) he received negative online ratings and even death threats from a person with anti-vaccination beliefs. Incidents like these have taken a toll on the public health community. [As of December 2020](#), 181 state and local public health department leaders have resigned, retired, or been fired during the pandemic, creating a potential leadership vacuum during the vaccine rollout. ACP firmly believes that no one should be subject to harassment, physical, or verbal violence at their place of work, and has [repeatedly spoken out](#) to condemn violence against physicians and other health care workers.

Conclusion

Thank you for your leadership in helping to address this growing crisis that is impacting physicians and frontline health care workers across the nation. ACP looks forward to working with you to help expedite passage of H.R. 2584/S.2768. If the College can serve as a resource on this issue or any other issue impacting health care delivery and clinician safety, please do not hesitate to contact Vy Oxman, Senior Associate of Legislative Affairs, at 202-261-4515 or via email at voxman@acponline.org.

Sincerely,



Omar T. Atiq, MD, MACP
President

