



December 15, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Courtney  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Baldwin and Representative Courtney:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am pleased to offer our support for the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, H.R. 2663/S. 1176. 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 continued 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.

ACP [supports](#) reducing and preventing instances of workplace violence, and bolstering workplace safety. Last year, we [urged](#) the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop, implement, and enforce a national standard addressing workplace violence in the health care setting. Thus, we support this legislation, which would direct OSHA to implement standards requiring employers of health and social service personnel to develop comprehensive workplace violence prevention plans and require violent incidents be reported to the U.S. Department of Labor on an annual basis.

The OSHA standard, as called for in H.R. 2663/S. 1176, would require employers within the health care and social service sectors to develop and implement a plan to protect their employees from workplace violence. The OSHA standard would cover tens of thousands of facilities, including hospitals, residential treatment facilities, non-residential treatment settings, among others. ACP policy recognizes that institutions have a duty to ensure the safety of their employees and must develop and implement policies, plans, and protocols to assess, report, reduce, and prevent workplace hazards and violence. This bill would also direct covered entities to provide in-person training and education to employees. 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. 2663/ S. 1176. 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](mailto:voxman@acponline.org).

Sincerely,



Omar T. Atiq, MD, MACP  
President