Sample Letter Six: Applicable to WY

[Date]

Dear [Legislator’s name or Governor’s name]:

As [the governor/a member] of the [state] chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing [number] internal medicine physicians, subspecialists and medical students in our state, I am writing on behalf of our chapter to urge you to introduce and pass legislation to protect physicians, public health officials, and health care workers from threats, harassment, and violence in the workplace and require employers to implement workplace protection programs.

These harmful acts of threats and violence have been increasing since the beginning of the pandemic and are having a negative impact on our ability to care for patients. Physicians and other clinicians have worked tirelessly to respond to the pandemic and protect our communities’ health, and we should be able to do our jobs free from violence. Rising violence against physicians and other health care workers is a [global](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7531183/#B1) problem, which the [World Medical Association](https://www.wma.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WHA73-WMA-statement-on-Covid-19-pandemic-response-.pdf) labeled “an international emergency” that “undermines the very foundations of health systems and ultimately impacts critically on patients’ health.” A 2018 analysis [found](https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/workplace-violence-healthcare-2018.htm) that health care and social service workers were five times as likely to experience workplace violence than workers overall, and that health care workers specifically made up 73 percent of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illness due to violence. The pandemic has [exacerbated](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7470723/%26sa%3DD%26source%3Ddocs%26ust%3D1646498866732569%26usg%3DAOvVaw3pXyez-ZhSLwSN6FyWGkzg/) this violence, adding to the challenges physicians and our health system are facing.

[insert any specific stories or data about violence against physicians/health care workers in your state]

Public health officials have also seen a dramatic increase in workplace violence during the pandemic. In October 2021, the *New York Times* [identified](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/19/us/public-health-threats-abuse.html) at least 500 top health officials who left their jobs since the beginning of the country, many because of the increased threats to their safety. These staff departures have affected more than [1 in 5](https://khn.org/news/article/over-half-of-states-have-rolled-back-public-health-powers-in-pandemic/) Americans.

There is no existing law in our state that provides legal protections for physicians, health care workers or public health officials against threats, harassment or acts of violence in the workplace. There is also no requirement on health care employers to implement workplace violence prevention programs. [38 states](https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/advocacy/state/workplace-violence2/) have established or increased criminal penalties for the assault of physicians and health care workers, and [35 states](https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/50-State-Survey-Legal-Protections-for-Public-Health-Officials.pdf) have prohibited impeding public health officials’ duties through threats, harassment, or violence. Ten states have adopted laws establishing workplace violence prevention standards for health care employers, often requiring tracking and reporting violent incidents and implementing workplace violence prevention programs. Our state needs to step up and enact similar protections.

Health care workers, physicians, and public health officials in our state deserve safety in our workplaces, and we are counting on you to take the necessary action to protect our community’s health and safety by protecting our health workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

[Insert name]

[Governor/Member]

[State] Chapter of the American College of Physicians