



**Herb B. Kuhn**  
President and CEO  
P.O. Box 60  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

December 14, 2017

Matt Wilson  
Adair County Prosecuting Attorney's Office  
P.O. Box 314  
Kirksville, MO 63501

Dear Mr. Wilson:

The Missouri Hospital Association represents the interests of 145 member hospitals across the state of Missouri. At least one of those hospitals is located in your jurisdiction. In many areas of Missouri, the local hospital is the largest employer. We need your support and assistance to provide a more secure workplace for the physicians, nurses and other health professionals who care for the patients of those facilities on a daily basis.

The incidence of workplace violence has become commonplace in communities of all sizes, demographic and socioeconomic compositions. Regrettably, health care facilities are no exception to this growing problem that represents a significant threat to employee safety and patient care.

The current challenges of violence are not limited to physicians, nurses or other health care staff — but also patients and visitors. Hospital executives around the state tell us that a decade ago, they would receive weekly reports of violent incidents in their hospitals; but now receive daily reports of incidents where staff are verbally abused, hit, kicked, shoved or beaten. MHA's 2017 annual member survey of internal and external threats revealed that 50 percent of our hospital members rank violent encounters among the top three threats. To further understand the issue, we have just completed a round of listening sessions, hearing from more than 225 of our hospital leaders, clinicians and front-line staff. Health care workers are experiencing physical, emotional and sexual violence weekly, and sometimes daily.

Violence against health care workers is a crime, whether the perpetrator is a patient or visitor to the hospital. In recognition of this growing problem, the Missouri General Assembly enacted a new law this year to curb this disturbing trend. Hospital personnel were added to the definition of "special victim" in Section 565.002, RSMo, thereby enhancing the penalties for assault of hospital staff. The new provision broadens the scope of protected health care workers from the emergency department to the entire hospital facility.

These protections are meaningless unless individuals are charged and punished for assaulting hospital staff. As we have convened stakeholders on the topic of workplace violence in the hospital setting, we asked our members if they had policies for reporting to law enforcement

Matt Wilson  
December 14, 2017  
Page 2

patients and visitors who assault staff. Anecdotally, we learned that many victims and their supervisors do not report assault because they do not believe the perpetrators will be prosecuted. We also learned that the status of hospital workers as special victims with respect to crimes against the person is relatively unknown. Therefore, we are committed to raising awareness of this issue and ask that you do the same.

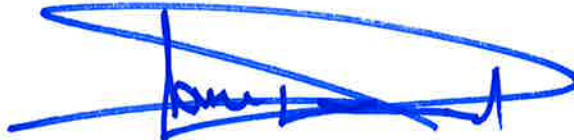
As we encourage our members to report violent encounters within the hospital walls to the proper authorities, we also urge you to carefully review these incidents and charge them accordingly. Missourians should expect zero tolerance for workplace violence, especially in the hospital setting. Ensuring that individuals who engage in such behavior are appropriately punished will further that policy and deter future assaults.

Should you wish to discuss this issue in more detail, please contact Jane Drummond, MHA's General Counsel and Vice President of Legal Affairs, at (573) 893-3700, ext. 1328 or via email at [jdrummond@mhanet.com](mailto:jdrummond@mhanet.com).

Sincerely,



Herb B. Kuhn  
President and CEO



Jane C. Drummond, J.D.  
General Counsel and Vice President of  
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