Workplace Violence and Bullying

S1538 / H2381 and S1539 / H2330

ANA Massachusetts supports legislation that can prevent violence against healthcare workers by patients, families, colleagues and supervisors. We are asking bill sponsors to expand the definition of workplace violence with legislative and regulatory language covering psychological assaults such as bullying, acts of psychological aggression, lateral violence, racism, etc.

There are two separate bills addressing plans healthcare employers/facilities must develop to prevent workplace violence:

**S1538/H2381** — An Act requiring healthcare facilities to develop and implement programs to prevent workplace violence.
S1538 – Senator Jason M. Lewis
H2381 – Representative Michael J. Moran and Steven S. Howitt

**S1539/H 2330** — An Act requiring healthcare employers to develop and implement programs to prevent workplace violence.
S1539 – Senators Joan B. Lovely, Paul R. Feeney, Robyn K. Kennedy, Jack Patrick Lewis
H2330 - Representative Denise Garlick

Bullying impacts all levels of our society (individual, organizational, and macrosystem), but healthcare workers experience one of the highest rates of workplace violence—reported to be between 35-85% in healthcare settings. The current nursing turnover rate is at 40%, and healthcare workers cite toxic workplace climate as one of their top reasons for leaving their jobs or supporting strikes.

A psychologically unsafe workplace due to violence and bullying decreases nurses’ ability to provide safe patient care. Issues such as who bears responsibility for workplace violence (employer or perpetrator), use of PTO vs. unpaid leave to seek victims’ services/legal assistance must be resolved in any legislation that goes forward.

ANAMASS advocates that in any legislation moving forward that the definition of violence aligns with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) definitions: Workplace violence consists of physically and psychologically damaging actions that occur in the workplace or while on duty and includes direct physical assaults (with or without weapons), written or verbal threats, physical or verbal harassment, and homicide.

ANA Massachusetts is the largest voluntary member professional organization for all nurses in the Commonwealth.