

HB2503 FACT SHEET

ASSAULT; HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER; CLASSIFICATION

Workplace violence against nurses and other health care workers is a disturbing and ongoing problem. Nationally, one in four nurses has been assaulted at work and health care workers are more likely to be exposed to violence than prison guards or police officers. In Arizona, as nationally, nurses and other health care workers have often been assaulted in emergency departments and other clinical settings.

According to the American Nurses Association 2013-2016 Health Risk Appraisal, 9 percent of nurses fear for their physical safety on the job. The 2011 ENA Violence Surveillance Study reported that, in a seven day period, 54.5% of the more than 7,000 responding nurses suffered physical and verbal abuse. These stats are unacceptable.

In Arizona, **HB2503** is trying to alleviate this problem. It would change the criminal classification of such an assault from a Class 6 undesignated felony to a Class 5 felony. Because it is now classified as Class 6, it is commonly pled down to a misdemeanor and little penalty results. And, because there is little consequence for the assault, perpetrators often return to the same or another facility and assault another nurses or health care professionals. By making it a Class 5 felony an assault will have more consequences for the perpetrator to hopefully deter future behavior.