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The Honorable Joe Courtney
U.S. House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Courtney:

On behalf of the Emergency Nurses Association and its nearly 45,000 members, I am writing to express ENA's support for H.R. 2531, the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act. This important and timely legislation will ensure that health care and social service employers take specific steps to protect their employees and patients from violence in the workplace.

As you know, workplace violence against health care workers, including emergency nurses, has become a national crisis. The CDC reported that harassment against health care workers more than doubled between 2018 and 2022. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, health care workers only accounted for about 10 percent of the national workforce, yet they represented about 48 percent of missed workdays due to violence in 2023.

Unfortunately, assaults and batteries directed at workers occur at especially high rates in emergency departments, which are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are required under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act to stabilize and treat the emergency medical conditions of all patients. Often, health care professionals in the ED interact with members of the public when emotions run high, and their behavior can sometimes become violent.

Research has found emergency nurses and other personnel in the ED experience a violent event about once every two months. Violence is exacerbating ongoing staffing shortages that have detrimental effects on patient care. A 2021 report highlighted that 77 percent of ED staff were exposed to workplace violence. We must do more to support nurses at work – their lives and the lives of patients in our communities depend on it. Further, When the Emergency Nurses Association conducted a random survey of members who worked in an emergency department in early 2024, more than half of the respondents indicated they had been physically assaulted, verbally assaulted or threatened with violence in the previous 30 days. Approximately 10 percent of the respondents indicated they were considering leaving nursing altogether because of workplace violence. This is a time when more, not fewer, nurses are needed, and we applaud your efforts to mitigate violence against them.

The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act will ensure that health care employers, including hospitals, take specific steps to prevent workplace violence and ensure the safety of patients and workers. This bill will require health care and social service employers to develop and implement a comprehensive violence prevention plan which must include procedures to identify and respond to risks that make workplaces vulnerable to violent incidents. In addition, the legislation will help ensure that employees are appropriately trained in mitigating hazards.

Emergency nurses are disproportionately victims of assaults in the workplace, and we commend your work to reduce violence in hospitals and other health care settings. Thank you for introducing this important legislation and for your leadership on this critical issue. If you have any questions, please contact ENA Director of Government Relations Rob Kramer at 202-465-4756.

Sincerely,

Ryan Oglesby, PhD, MHA, RN, CEN, CFRN, NEA-BC
2025 ENA President