

Issue**Workplace Violence for Health Care – S.851 and HR 1195****Position**

ASHNHA opposes this legislation.

Summary

Alaska's hospitals and nursing homes are committed to a culture of safety for every worker, patient, and family member who enters our facilities. ASHNHA opposes this legislation because Alaska facilities have already implemented, and continue to implement, specifically tailored policies and programs to address workplace violence. Congress can help impact workplace violence in health care facilities through increased funding for expanded delivery of behavioral health services and support for hospitals to expand educational programs.

ANALYSIS

The proposed legislation (S.851 and H.R. 1195) directs the Secretary of Labor to issue, on an expedited timetable, an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard requiring employers in health care and social services to develop and implement a comprehensive workplace violence prevention plan.

Alaska's hospitals and nursing homes are committed to a culture of safety for every worker, patient, and family member who enters our facilities. ASHNHA opposes this legislation because Alaska facilities have already implemented, and continue to implement, specifically tailored policies and programs to address workplace violence, making the proposed OSHA standards unnecessary and unwarranted.

ASHNHA is committed to helping our members prevent and reduce violence in the workplace. We helped pass legislation at a state level to impact the problem. We also offer a workplace violence toolkit, sponsor regular trainings for hospital staff in how to de-escalate conflict before violence occurs, and support technology solutions that allow emergency departments to share medical records and better treat patients with a history of violence.

The work done in Alaska to date allows health care facilities to implement the workplace violence plans that best meet the unique needs of their individual operations and communities. In contrast, the language in the proposed legislation imposes prescriptive mandates and fails to account for size differences of facilities and the risk of violence. Compliance for small and rural facilities in Alaska would be challenging and costly, which puts more strain on resources that are already scarce.



Additionally, the Joint Commission, which is responsible for the accreditation of many Alaska hospitals, is implementing new / revised workplace violence prevention requirements beginning January 1, 2022. The [prepublication standards](#) are available for review. Rather than impose additional mandates, providing support for implementation of these new requirements would be helpful.

Much of the increase in workplace violence is due to growing numbers of behavioral health patients being treated in emergency departments and acute care settings. The opioid epidemic also contributes to the problem. We believe there are other productive actions Congress can take to help impact workplace violence in health care facilities, such as increased funding for expanded delivery of behavioral health services, and support for hospitals to expand educational programs.

The approaches already underway in Alaska are vital and will help mitigate workplace violence. We need to support health care facilities to address workplace violence through policies and strategies best suited to their needs and the needs of the communities they serve. Mandating costly, generic OSHA standards through federal law is not an effective way for addressing workplace violence. ASHNHA opposes the proposed legislation but stands ready and willing to work with policymakers on solutions that will improve Alaska's hospital's ability to address workplace violence.

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