



Maine Hospital Association

MAINE'S LEADING
VOICE FOR HEALTHCARE

Testimony of the Maine Hospital Association

LD 532 - *An Act To Protect Health Care Workers By Addressing Assaults In Health Care Settings*

March 17, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Jeffrey Austin and I am presenting testimony **in support of LD 532** on behalf of the Maine Hospital Association.

Hospitals are taking a number of steps to prevent violence in their facilities. Even the Maine Hospital Association is doing more work on this issue. We need to make sure the legislature, police and local prosecutors are doing what they can as well. We believe this bill sends the appropriate message to police, prosecutors and the public that you take this issue very seriously.

My colleague is collecting data from our members.

In just the last few months, there were over 500 events recorded by only 2/3 of our members.

- 289 events reported from 20 hospitals (Dec. 2024)
- 263 events reported from 20 hospitals (Jan. 2025)

At this rate, there are 9 workplace incidents of violence every day.

Behind each of these data points are hospital employees – nurses, support staff, administrators who are enduring this violence.

Here are some examples from the past two months:

-Patient was standing at bedside with this RN and nurse tech. Patient was very unsteady on their feet and swaying back and forth. After using the urinal this RN told the patient that it was time to return to bed. Patient was uncooperative and started to become agitated. After Patient continued to refuse to turn around and sit. This RN and the nurse tech helped the patient turn around; while turning the patient began to lose their balance, this RN held the patient up which upset the patient. Next the patient punched this RN in the left chest wall and stated "I will do whatever the fuck I

want you fucking bitch". Patient attempted to punch this RN a second time but the punch was blocked. Multiple staff members and security came to help assist the patient back to bed. Once in bed the patient began to calm down.

-Patient was admitted to room 399a from another unit and this writer heard yelling and screaming from room 399. This writer entered the room and found patient yelling at staff because she didn't want to be touched or talked to. This writer was walking around the bed to pick items up off the floor that the patient had thrown, and the patient kicked me several times, hit my side/back a couple of times and pinched my left forearm causing a bruise.

-On Thursday January 30, 2025 at approximately 0830 Security reported that the patient on the adolescent assaulted his DHHS worker by making multiple attempts to swipe at her face and made attempts to kick her leg. Security enter the ED ESA adolescent side to deter the patient from continuing to assault the DHHS worker. At approximately 0834 the patient attempts to kick Security in the leg this is when Security suggests to the DHHS worker that they clear the adolescent side to allow the patient to deescalate. At approximately 0835 the patient hits their knee and head off the half wall on the ED ESA adolescent side repeatedly causing unknown injuries to themselves. At approximately 0836 (Staff Nurse, Emergency Department), (Staff Nurse, Emergency Department), (Psychiatric Technician, Emergency Department), (Psychiatric Technician, Emergency Department), and Security enter the Ed ESA adolescent side to attempt and deescalate the patient with food and the TV. At approximately 0837 the patient charged (RN) and hit her in the face, Security then stepped in between and stopped the patient from any further attempted assaults on medical staff. The patient then attempted to kick Security. At approximately 0838 Medical staff and Security clears the ED ESA adolescent side. No Medical treatment was needed, No EAP, and No charges were pressed for the individuals involved.

-Around 1400, pt was pacing around the mileu, a social worker was in the mileu with pt. Pt started to escalate and slapped the social worker in the face. This RN and security went over to the mileu to check on the social worker and pt. While this RN was walking through the mileu, the pt struck this RN in the back of the neck. Pt was able to de-escalate verbally.

-Patient, punched staff member, a CNA, multiple times in my presence and per CNA statement multiple times prior to my entrance into patient's room. Per CNA statement, patient became upset when she was putting a tab brief on her. This nurse redirected patient, assuring her that violence/abuse would not be tolerated and called security. Unable to reason with patient as behaviors continued. Pt verbalized that she understood that purposefully putting her hands on someone else was abuse. Pt then stated that she, "don't give a shit."

There are hundreds just like these....and the patients are not all suffering mental health issues and the setting is not always in the emergency room!

Maine needs to take this crisis more seriously and raise the penalties on those who assault our staff.

Thank you for accepting our comments.