

Wisconsin Hospital Association: Legislation addressing health care worker violence sent to Gov. Evers

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Madison, Wis., March 8, 2022—Today, the Wisconsin State Senate concurred with Assembly Bill 960, making threats of violence against health care workers a Class H felony. Led by Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg), alongside Representative Gae Magnafici (R-Dresser) and Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine), the legislation passed both chambers of the Legislature on a voice vote and now heads to Governor Evers' desk for his signature.

“Republicans and Democrats agreed on a very important message today—threatening a health care worker in Wisconsin is unacceptable,” said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. “Our state’s hospitals and their thousands of staff thank the legislative leaders for championing this proposal and appreciate support from lawmakers of both parties in the Assembly and Senate.”

Assembly Bill 960 builds on previous efforts last session to make battery against a licensed health care provider in a Wisconsin hospital a Class H felony. This session’s bill expands these existing criminal penalties to situations where battery is committed or threats are made to a health care provider’s family and in other health care settings, like clinics and nursing homes.

“We know that threats of violence lead to both physical violence and emotional trauma for health care providers and their families,” continued Borgerding. “When health care providers choose to leave the profession for the safety of themselves or their families, we all lose. Our state, like all others across the nation, needs to reverse the troubling trend of increased violence and threats towards health care

workers. Today's action will help reverse this trend in Wisconsin."

After receiving bipartisan support in both houses of the legislature, the Wisconsin Hospital Association asks that Governor Evers sign Assembly Bill 960 into law.

Following enactment of Assembly Bill 960, WHA will work alongside the Department of Justice to develop signage and model language, as required under the legislation, for hospitals to use in their facilities as they educate patients, visitors, providers and staff about the newly established penalties for committing battery or threatening a health care worker or their family.