

Date

Name and Address

Dear Senator or Representative]:

When individuals reflect on the demands of the health care work environment, the real concern of workplace violence is often overlooked. The Florida State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) is actively working to reduce the risk of workplace violence to which emergency department nurses are exposed in the course of their normal work day. We are writing to you today to seek your support for legislation that Would increase the penalties for individuals who assault health care workers, especially nurses.

All workers deserve a work environment free from physical violence and verbal abuse. Emergency nurses are particularly vulnerable to such violence. A survey of 1,000 ENA members conducted in October 2006 found that 86% had been the victim of workplace violence in the preceding three years, with family members and visitors as likely to perpetrate abusive behavior as patients. Nearly 20% reported that they experience workplace violence frequently.

According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, violence may occur in any setting, but most frequently occurs in psychiatric wards, emergency departments, waiting rooms, and geriatric units. The U.S. Department of Justice's **2001 National Crime Victimization Survey, 1993 to 1999** stated that the average annual rate for nonfatal violent crime for all occupations was 12.6 per 1,000 workers. The rate for nonfatal violent crime against nurses was 21.9 per 1,000 workers. Data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2004 show that among health care practitioners, 46% of all nonfatal assaults and violent acts involving days away from work were committed against registered nurses.

The stress of workplace violence can contribute to job dissatisfaction. Among nursing staffs, it can cause low worker morale, high rates of sick time, and shorten lengths of employment. In an era of nursing shortages, this added stress may make certain workplaces less desirable for nurses to select for employment. With the challenges **Florida** is facing with nursing shortages, it is particularly important that nurses and all health care workers be able to provide patient care in a safe workplace. **In our state it is a felony to assault a first responder, but not a first receiver.**

As your constituent, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the importance of legislation that would reduce violence toward health care workers. We will contact your office shortly to make an appointment.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration,

[Insert name]

[Title and/or Chapter name]

Florida Emergency Nurses Association