

January 23, 2024

Position: **Vote YES on AB 977**

To: The Honorable Members of the California State Assembly

From: Vanessa Gonzalez, Vice President, State Advocacy

AB 977 (Rodriguez) – Support

Health care workers in hospitals across California are increasingly subject to violent threats and attacks. California's health care workers must be better protected while they care for others and save lives.

For these reasons, the California Hospital Association, on behalf of more than 400 hospitals and health systems, supports Assembly Bill (AB) 977, which would extend the penalties for violence committed against first responders to include all health care workers who provide services within emergency departments.

- Under current law, violence against health care workers inside an emergency department is penalized differently depending on the category of the health care worker and the location of the attack.
- Health care workers are trained to understand when a patient's behavior is related to their physical or mental health condition versus when a patient or visitor is being unnecessarily violent.
- Hospitals and health systems make significant investments to protect their employees, including: development and implementation of comprehensive workplace violence prevention plans, regular reports on incidents of violence to Cal/OSHA, installation of metal detectors, use of additional security personnel, and enhanced weapon detection protocols.

AB 977 is an important step toward providing all health care workers with the same protections, whether they are inside a hospital emergency department or elsewhere.

For these reasons, CHA urges your AYE vote on AB 977.