



June 28, 2024

The Honorable Richard D. Roth
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1021 O St., Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 2975 (Gibson) — Oppose unless Amended

Dear Senator Roth:

Hospitals are committed to providing a safe, healthy, and welcoming environment for patients, staff, and visitors. They understand that safety is a crucial element of the healing environment they strive to create for patients every day, and they take proactive measures to reduce violent behavior in their facilities.

The California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of 400 member hospitals and health systems, is grateful to Assemblymember Gipson for his attention to workplace violence, an issue that continues to be a priority for California's hospitals. Unfortunately, Assembly Bill (AB) 2975 (Gipson, D-Gardena) misses the mark, hampering hospitals' ability to effectively screen for weapons in their facilities. For that reason, **CHA continues to oppose AB 2975, unless it is amended.** Hospitals appreciate the author's willingness to work through previously raised issues and look forward to further discussing the following concerns.

As amended, AB 2975 would direct the Cal/OSHA Standards Board to amend the existing Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care regulation by requiring hospitals to implement a weapons detection screening policy that includes the use of weapons detection devices. However, the bill would preclude a hospital from using a hand-held metal detector as its sole weapons detection device. This exclusion effectively eliminates a low-cost, well-established, and effective means of screening. This is particularly problematic for hospitals that lack the physical space or financial means necessary to invest in a standalone weapons detection device; those hospitals would be unable to comply with the law. Hospitals vary widely in terms of layout, physical space, and available resources. They must be allowed flexibility to determine the weapons detection method that best suits their communities' needs.

Similarly, AB 2975 would mandate the location of the weapons detection screening. Under current law, hospitals conduct safety assessments that help not just determine where screening might be feasible, but also identify the screening locations that would most effectively ensure weapons do not enter hospital facilities. Given vast differences across facilities, it is critical to allow hospitals discretion in implementing the proposed requirements.

Just as hospitals should be allowed discretion in how they detect weapons, they should also be allowed discretion in responding to any weapons found. AB 2975 would require hospitals to adopt protocols for storing confiscated weapons and, as amended, returning a weapon to its owner. As noted previously, hospitals are not equipped to store weapons, and it would be inappropriate to require them to take temporary ownership of weapons brought to their facilities. Rather, hospitals should have the discretion to determine how to address detected weapons, recognizing that no individual will be denied care.

Lastly, integrating a weapons detection device is no easy endeavor; the cost and physical space required present significant challenges. This is especially true for rural and critical access hospitals that already face financial challenges. CHA welcomes continued discussions around exempting rural and critical access hospitals from this bill's requirements or delaying implementation for those hospitals.

Hospitals are dedicated to decreasing the incidence of workplace violence and increasing both the quality of patient care and employee satisfaction. Hospitals are in the best position to assess and understand their unique safety needs and can work with the Cal/OSHA Standards Board to find the most appropriate solutions. Patients, visitors, and employees alike deserve tailored solutions to reduce violence in hospitals. A one size fits all approach will be far less effective in keeping our communities safe and healthy.

We look forward to continued discussions.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Scott
Senior Vice President, Advocacy
California Hospital Association

cc: The Honorable Mike Gibson
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Committee
Vince Marchand, Principal Consultant, Senate Health Committee
Joe Parra and Tim Conaghan, Consultants, Senate Republican Caucus