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April 1, 2019

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baldwin:

On behalf of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and our more than 43,000 members, I am writing to express our support for S. 851, the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act of 2019. This important and timely legislation will ensure that health care and social service employers undertake steps to protect their employees and patients from violence in the workplace.

As you know, workplace violence against health care workers, including emergency nurses, has become a national crisis. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), workers in the health care sector accounted for only 20% of workplace injuries yet comprised approximately 50% of all victims of workplace assault. The same study found that between 2002 and 2013, serious incidents of workplace violence were four times more common for workers in the health care sector versus all workers in the U.S.

Unfortunately, assaults and batteries directed at workers occur at especially high rates in emergency departments (EDs), which are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are required under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) to stabilize and treat all patients. Often, health care professionals in the ED interact with members of the public when emotions run high and their behavior can sometimes become violent. Research has found that emergency nurses and other personnel in the ED experience a violent event about once every two months. Further, a 2011 study reported that one-third of emergency nurses reported they had considered leaving the profession due to workplace violence.

The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (S. 851) will ensure that health care employers take specific steps to prevent workplace violence and ensure the safety of patients and workers. S. 851 will require health care and social service employers to develop and implement a comprehensive workplace violence prevention plan. These plans must include procedures to identify and respond to risks that make health care and social service settings vulnerable to violent incidents. In addition, they will help ensure that employees are appropriately trained in mitigating hazards.

Emergency nurses are disproportionately victims of assaults in the workplace, we would like to thank you for introducing this important legislation and your leadership on this critical issue. If you have any questions, please contact ENA's Chief Government Relations Officer, Richard Mereu, at 202-741-9373.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patricia Kunz Howard'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Patricia Kunz Howard, PhD, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN, NE-BC, FAEN, FAAN  
2019 ENA President