

SCHA Position:

According to our 2024 Workplace Violence Collaborative report, at least 7 workplace violence incidents occur in SC hospitals every day. Protecting these healthcare workers from assault is an issue of paramount importance to SC hospitals. In addition to degrading the quality of care and creating a hostile and unfair work environment, workplace violence also harms our ability to recruit and retain the healthcare workers necessary to ensure our ability to care for South Carolina's growing and aging population. SCHA strongly supports legislation to increase penalties to offenders that harm healthcare professionals.

Proposed Legislative Action:

- S.346 amends Chapter 3, Title 16 of the South Carolina Code to establish specific criminal offenses and enhanced penalties for assault and battery committed against healthcare professionals, persons in healthcare facilities, and —after amendments—correctional facility employees.
- The Bill is currently contested on the Senate Calendar with an amendment broadening the scope to other individuals. Unfortunately, this means healthcare workers continue to work without this additional layer of protection.

“When nurses describe their units as a combat zone it’s not metaphorical, it’s a cry for help.”

— Chris Schaff,
SC Hospital Nurse Leader



Why Reform is Needed:

Healthcare professionals provide life-saving care every day, yet these caregivers operate in some of the most dangerous workplaces in the country.

- According to a recent Press Ganey survey, on average, two nurses are assaulted every hour in the U.S.
- A 2024 American College of Emergency Physicians survey found that 9 out of 10 reported having been attacked or threatened in the past year.
- South Carolina is one of only two states in the country without some form of enhanced penalties for these violent acts.

SCHA Recommends:

- SCHA supports S.346 to increase penalties to offenders that harm healthcare professionals.
- S.346 has the potential to positively impact hospital retention and recruitment rates by demonstrating to healthcare staff that any actions of violence against them will be litigated and perpetrators will face enhanced penalties. This sets a clear stance that hospitals want to protect their employees from harm.
- S.346 bill supplements the established preventative measures hospitals have enacted to reduce incidents of violence.