



Beiser-Backed Law Toughening Legal Protections for Nurses Goes into Effect Jan. 1

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A new law backed by State Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton, that increases penalties for criminals who assault on-duty nurses takes effect Jan. 1. The measure provides nurses with similar legal protections provided to others who serve the public, such as teachers and police officers.

“Nurses have enormous responsibilities to ensure their patients are given the best care,” Beiser said. “Nurses shouldn’t have to worry about being assaulted on the job. This new law gives them the added protections they deserve.”

House Bill 801 (now Public Act 98-0369) classifies battery of an on-duty nurse as aggravated battery. Battery crimes committed against many who work in the public interest, including teachers, law enforcement officers and emergency medical technicians, are already classified as aggravated battery, a Class 3 felony carrying a sentence of up to five years in prison. Prosecutors would maintain discretion over what charges to file, ensuring that egregious and intentional attacks are charged as aggravated battery.

“Nurses deserve the best set of protections due to their constant dedication in serving the injured, ill and elderly,” Beiser said. “This new law will help ensure that prosecutors have the ability to charge those who assault nurses with the appropriate crime.”

Health care workers face a disproportionate risk of violence in the workplace compared to other workers. A 2004 report by the Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) stated that 48 percent of all nonfatal injuries from occupational assaults and violence occurred in healthcare and social service settings. Of those in the healthcare and social service sectors, nurses were the most likely of all to be victims of assault.