

October 3, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the Children's Hospital Association, collectively representing more than 270,000 physicians and more than 220 children's hospitals across the country, we write to urge you to investigate the organizations, individuals, and entities coordinating, provoking, and carrying out bomb threats and threats of personal violence against children's hospitals and physicians across the U.S.

From Boston to Akron to Nashville to Seattle, children's hospitals, academic health systems, and physicians are being targeted and threatened for providing evidence-based health care. These attacks have not only made it difficult and dangerous for institutions and practices to provide this care, they have also disrupted many other services to families seeking care. In one hospital, a new mother was prevented from being with her preterm infant because the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit was on lockdown due to a bomb threat. Children's hospitals across the nation have substantially increased security in addition to working with local and federal law enforcement, both on their main hospital campuses as well as across their ambulatory delivery sites, in order to ensure the safety of patients, families, and medical staff who work there. In addition, some providers have needed 24/7 security. Children's hospitals and their medical staffs continue to face increased threats via social media – including to their personal accounts. Coupled with harassing emails, phone calls, and protestors at health care sites, there is elevated and justifiable fear among families, patients, and staff.

These coordinated attacks threaten federally protected rights to health care for patients and their families. The attacks are rooted in an intentional campaign of disinformation, where a few high-profile users on social media share false and misleading information targeting individual physicians and hospitals, resulting in a rapid escalation of threats, harassment, and disruption of care across multiple jurisdictions. Our organizations have called on technology companies to do more to prevent this practice on digital platforms, and we now urge your office to take swift action to investigate and prosecute all organizations, individuals, and entities responsible.

Attacks against health care institutions that threaten violence, intimidation, and physical harm have left hospitals, staff, and their communities shaken. Providers of evidence-based gender-affirming health care and their colleagues are facing increased stress and fear on top of the conditions they have faced while working on the frontlines of a global pandemic for nearly three years. Families seeking care at these institutions as well as our those providing their care fear for their personal safety in the wake of these attacks.

Our organizations are dedicated to the health and well-being of all children and adolescents. We are committed to the full spectrum of patient care—from prevention to critical care. We stand with the physicians, nurses, mental health specialists, and other health care professionals providing evidence-based health care, including gender-affirming care, to children and adolescents.

On behalf of the patients and families we serve and the physicians we represent, we thank you for your attention to our request.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Medical Association

Children's Hospital Association