# Workers at Tewksbury Hospital Protest for Better Security Measures



Workers at Tewksbury Hospital in Massachusetts held a protest on a recent Monday afternoon to highlight ongoing safety and security concerns at the facility. The protest, which took place outside the nearby Tewksbury Public Library, follows a letter sent in April to Brooke Doyle, the commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, calling for better security measures.

These concerns were intensified by a stabbing incident on the hospital campus in February. In response to these security issues, the Department of Public Health, which oversees the hospital, initiated a security assessment led by Thomas Turco III, the former head of the state’s Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. This assessment includes input from two retired State Police officers.

The hospital, used by both the Department of Public Health and the Department of Mental Health, has seen a recent increase in patients from the criminal justice system. This influx is reportedly making it difficult to manage the hospital effectively and safely, with instances of overcrowding and violence becoming more common. According to a report, the number of forensic patients admitted through the criminal courts has risen by 10 percent between 2018 and 2023.

Workers, including nurses and social workers, expressed their concerns about the lack of appropriate facilities and training to handle such patients safely. Incidents of threats, groping, and assaults are reportedly frequent. The staff is also advocating for exclusive units for forensic patients to better manage the care and security of all individuals at the hospital.

As part of its efforts, the Department of Mental Health has conducted listening sessions and is working on staffing and retention challenges highlighted by the decline in workers since 2019. Safety assessments and reviews of hospital infrastructure, equipment, and policies are ongoing, according to Ann Scales, a spokesperson for the Department of Public Health.