



CARE BRAVELY

SB700 – Maryland Department of Health – Prevent Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings Public Awareness Campaign Workgroup

Senate Finance Committee - March 17, 2022

Testimony of Martha Nathanson, Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development

Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB700 - Maryland Department of Health – Prevent Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings Public Awareness Campaign Workgroup. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County; and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

Threats of violence and acts of violence are increasing in both occurrence and severity in the health care setting. Hospitals, physician offices, pharmacies, clinics and other sites are open to the public and should be places of refuge and service for individuals who are sick and seeking medical care. The experience of workplace violence has not only physical consequences, but personal, emotional, and professional consequences as well, for both health care workers and patients.

ALL personnel are subject to violence in the health care setting, not only clinical personnel such as physicians, nurses and therapists, but also patient transporters, admissions, financial counselors, food service, environmental services, social workers, security officers, patient advocates, and many others. Threats occur from patients, families, and visitors. For example, visitors who don't want to leave when visiting hours end threaten and/or assault clinical and security staff. Family members threaten to kill a surgeon or nurse treating a gunshot patient if the patient dies. Patients or visitors threaten staff transporting a patient for a procedure, or a patient advocate trying to console them. Even security personnel dispatched to assist staff are threatened.

LifeBridge Health continuously enhances its processes to prevent workplace violence to protect employees, patients and visitors. For example, we use electronic systems for reporting and tracking incidents, implement zero tolerance policies, provide training on de-escalation techniques, install expensive surveillance technology and access control systems, add off-duty & special police officers to our rolls, and in high-risk areas, disseminate personal wearable safety alarms, among other interventions. Violence should never be considered "part of the job," and providing the public with increased knowledge and understanding about the problem and solutions will help fight this trend and provide the support our health care providers need and deserve.

For all of the above reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on SB700.

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