

SB 298 – Criminal Law – Threat Against Public Health Official or Hospital Staff Member

Position: *Support*

February 8, 2022

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Bill Summary

SB 298 makes it illegal for a person to make or send a threat to a health official or hospital staff member. Anyone in violation is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not to exceed 90 days or a fine not to exceed \$500 or both.

MedStar Health's Position

MedStar Health's top priority is the safety of its patients, staff, and visitors. Protecting our associates from the dangers of workplace violence is a key priority for MedStar Health. In 2017, MedStar Health established a Workplace Violence Prevention Committee that has:

- Developed and implemented a system-wide electronic system for reporting incidences of workplace violence;
- Developed a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence;
- Trained over 2,400 associates working in three high-risk areas (security, behavioral health, and emergency department) in de-escalation and physical skills;
- Implemented a new mandatory training module for all 36,000 associates on what efforts MedStar Health is undertaking to ensure the safety of associates and patients;
- Beginning in September 2019, de-escalation training for over 12,000 associates whose responsibilities place them in a position of dealing directly with patients, visitors, and other members of the community;
- Produced and distributed video to educate all associates on MedStar Health's Active Shooter – Code Silver policy and procedures; and
- Provided personal wearable safety alarms.

Despite these preventative efforts, more action is needed. MedStar Health supports the intent of SB 298, however, since threats can occur against hospital staff who are not providing personal care or medical treatment to patients, **we recommend broadening the definition to include any individual employed by the hospital.** Expanding the definition will ensure all hospital employees are protected regardless of their job title or duties.

For the reasons above, we ask that you give SB 298 a ***favorable*** report.