

Testimony of Scott Graham
In Support of Maryland SB 1158
Tuesday April 2, 2024

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate and protect the over 100,000 healthcare workers in the state of Maryland. My name is Scott Graham and I am the Regional Safety Officer and Director of Emergency Preparedness, Life Safety and Workforce Wellness for Holy Cross Health Maryland Region. I've been involved with trying to prevent workplace violence for over 10 years now.

Prior to coming into healthcare, I served Montgomery County for 26 years as a professional firefighter paramedic, and I continued to do so today as a volunteer in that same jurisdiction. As a firefighter paramedic, I have workplace violence protections under the law from people who want to intentionally do us harm.

Law enforcement officers bring patients. To our emergency departments each and every day who have been detained or arrested for violent acts in the street. Once in our care, Our health care workers are in an extremely vulnerable position. This bill will add yet another deterrence when a person is making the intentional decision to harm.

I come to you today with a very simple request. Just a few years ago, nurses, doctors, technicians, environmental care workers, food and nutrition workers were all lauded as heroes in the COVID pandemic.

Today I represent them as victims. Workplace violence has increased exponentially and there are numbers to prove that statement. The simple ask today of you as a committee is to unanimously support this legislation and continue to protect our healthcare heroes. I don't have to go into a lot of

numbers and statistics to say that there were over 1250 lost work days in the past 3 years in my organization alone, some with permanent physical injury – ALL with emotional injury. This number pales in comparison to some of my colleagues here today with much higher numbers. But the number 1 is the most significant statistic and today you have the opportunity to send a message and prevent that one from occurring, that one injury that could be career ending but more importantly, life saving.

We realize in health care that there are certain conditions that a patient or visitor cannot help. There are medical conditions which should be recognized in the decision of whether or not an act is intentional. There are times in which medical or physical conditions cause patients to act in a manner which could cause injury to our healthcare workers.

Today, we look at the intentional act of someone who chooses, without any other reason, to do harm to our health care workers. Patients and visitors who have the intent to harm health care professionals need to

be held accountable or those statistics and numbers will continue to grow with the increasing number of violence that we see in our healthcare facilities. This situation is out of control. When are you going to take action and stop and protect the innocent healthcare workers in Maryland as has been afforded to other professions in public safety and perhaps the judicial arena?

Only you can make this happen. In the meantime, more and more healthcare professionals, who have a deep passion for healing and caring for each and every one us here today, are leaving their desired profession because of the threats and their fear of being severely injured or even losing their lives.

Despite the ongoing efforts of education and awareness, we need this additional step to stop the needless violence that occurs each and every day in our health care settings. Just this morning. Prior to me leaving to testify before you today. A health care professional was attacked with a tire plugging tool. If you're not familiar with what that is, just picture A "T"

shaped object hidden in somebody's hand coming at you with about a 5 inch spike on the end of it.

Each and every health care organization represented here, as well as those not here today, have engaged in aggressive training and education as well as.

Implementing. Best practice and state-of-the-art.

Detection and prevention systems. Despite our efforts. These patients and visitors who intentionally choose to harm are still within our settings.

Over 80% of all nurses and health care workers will attest to being a victim of workplace violence. Good.

As I asked you earlier and I implore you now, you have the opportunity to send the message that this is not acceptable., It is not acceptable in our society, and it is not acceptable to assault, to injure, or to attack. Our health care workers. The same people from whom you seek care and healing.

MD SB1158, Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship – Penalty Sacred Places Safety Act will in fact be another step forward to saving our healthcare heroes! I am not only testifying on behalf of our healthcare professional, but I am offering to work with you to make this long overdue bill a reality.

Thank you for your time and your action. Remember, “If Only” are the 2 worst words in our language. I hope no other healthcare worker must sit before you in the future and ask for your support to protect them.

God bless you all.