



EMERGENCY NURSES
ASSOCIATION

Maryland State Council
Safe Practice Safe Care

To: Maryland House Judiciary Committee
Housse Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Date: February 13, 2024

Re: **HB 547 Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of
Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**
FAVORABLE oral and written testimony

Good day, Chairman Clippenger, Vice Chair Bartlett, Committee members,

My name is Lisa Tenney, and I am testifying on behalf of The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association in favor of HB 547 Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act).

Thank you to the sponsors for this commonsense bill that supports **ZERO TOLERANCE** for violence in educational facilities, medical facilities, and places of worship.

I would like to address violence in the medical facilities. Studies show that ER nurses and staff experience a violent event every two months. ⁽¹⁾ Of course, our patients receiving care have the same experience. Sometimes the events are directed towards the medical or nursing staff, but often, the violence is directed towards other patients. For example:

- A patient did not like his treatment plan and did not want to be discharged. He asked for a bedpan and urinated and had a bowel movement in it. Then in anger, he threw the contents of the bedpan onto another patient, which exposed an elderly woman to his body fluids. She was severely traumatized and required follow-up monitoring.
- Another patient was high on PCP and broke out of his restraints. He picked up an IV pole and ran towards an elderly frail gentleman on a ventilator in a bed. A nurse saw the patient coming towards the old man and threw his body over him. The nurse suffered a traumatic brain injury and depressed skull fracture when he got hit in the head by the IV pole.

Maryland's Patient's Bill of Rights states that patients have a RIGHT to be safe in hospitals. One of those rights reads: **Be provided care in a safe environment free from all forms of abuse**

and neglect, including verbal, mental, physical, and sexual abuse. (2) This right should be supported by the strictest consequences for those who endanger vulnerable patients who are receiving medical care.

HB 547 would once again establish respect for this sacred place where vulnerable patients come to receive health care. Patients need and deserve protection from those who would indiscriminately harm them.

When violence in healthcare facilities occurs, it endangers everyone present. Staff, patients, and visitors get injured. The violence interferes with patient care and can cause detrimental delays. When violence happens in emergency rooms it is especially difficult for patients because these patients are already coping with the longest ER wait times of any state in the nation. (3)

Maryland's emergency nurses thank you in advance for a favorable bipartisan review.

Respectfully,

Lisa Tenney

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Resources:

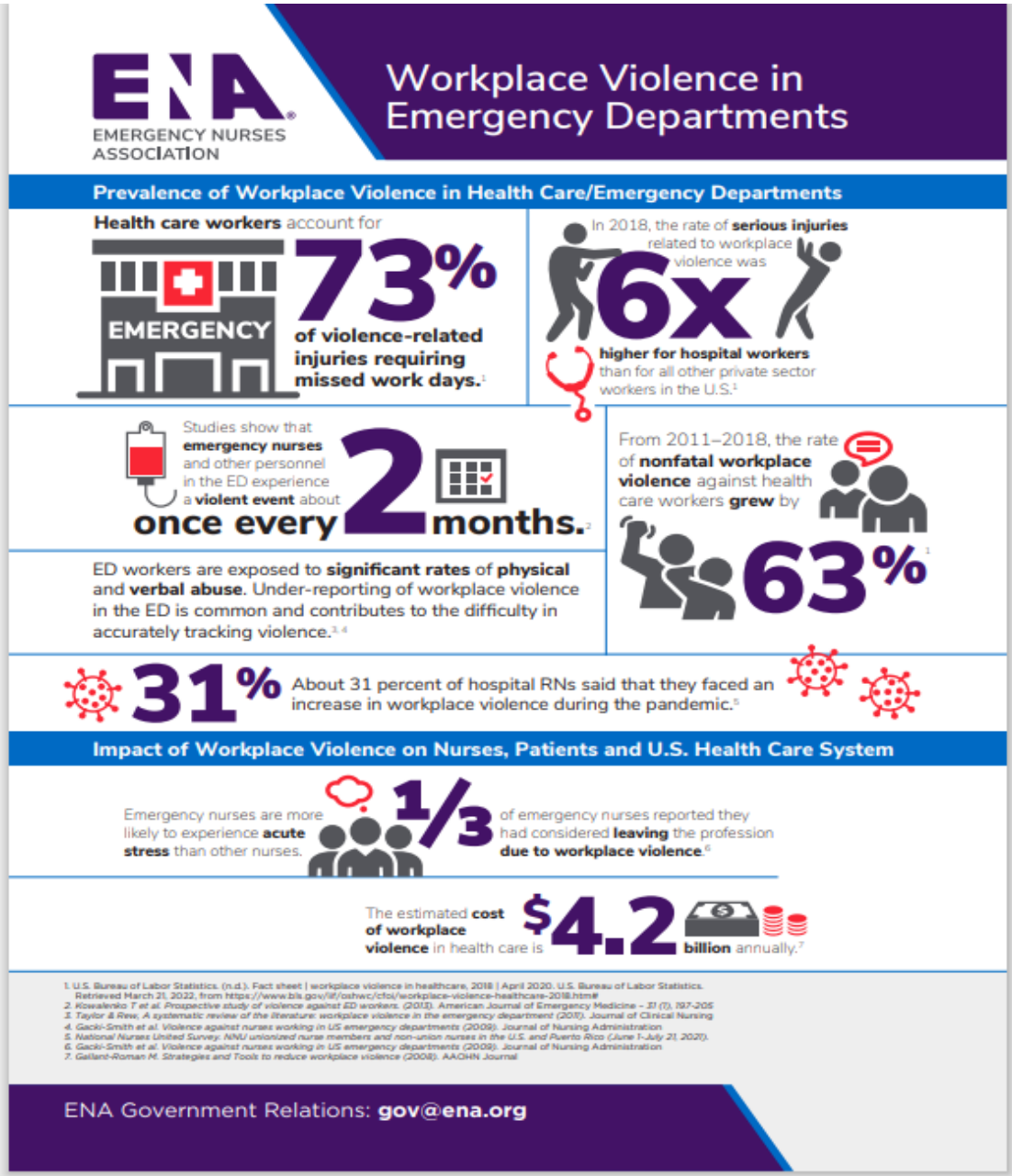
(1) Maryland Patient's Bill of Rights Law. 2019.

**Know your rights as a hospital
patient:
It can save your life!**



A new law to protect the rights of all Maryland hospital patients went into effect on October 1, 2019. The Hospital Patient's Bill of Rights, which passed the Maryland General Assembly unanimously, was signed into law by Governor Hogan on April 30, 2019.

- (2) Emergency Nurses Association. 2023. Workplace Violence in Emergency Departments Infographic. gov@ena.org



- (3) Brown, Danielle. 2023. Some of the longest emergency room wait times in Maryland can stretch almost a day. Maryland Matters. <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2023/11/22/md-officials-local-commissions-and-hospitals-work-to-untangle-issues-contributing-to-long-er-wait-times/>