



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**House Bill 547 - Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of  
Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

**Position: *Support***  
February 13, 2024  
House Judiciary Committee

**MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association’s (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 547.

Hospitals are places of healing and safety for patients, caregivers, and visitors. However, hospitals in Maryland and nationwide increasingly report incidents of violence, including physical assaults resulting in broken bones, scratches and bruises, as well as verbal and emotional abuse.

Maryland hospitals work to create an environment that promotes healing and prioritizes the patient experience while also preserving the health and well-being of the workforce. We are not alone in this struggle. Statistics show that health care and social service workers are five times as likely to suffer a workplace-related injury than any other industry.

Passage of HB 547 would demonstrate the state’s commitment to protect Maryland’s health care workforce. This is critical. Violence has no place within the health care setting. Hospitals protect staff through capital investments such as redesigning patient care areas to allow for clear lines of sight, training including de-escalation, and creating multidisciplinary teams to respond to urgent patient situations in a trauma-informed manner.

Despite these efforts, our health care workforce continues to experience violence every day. About 73% of aggravated assaults and 86% of simple assaults against health care workers were from patients, family members, and visitors, according to the 2022 Healthcare Crime Survey released by the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

This violence is not limited to certain hospital units like the emergency department or behavioral health unit or to clinical staff. Across the state, Maryland’s hospitals—both in rural and urban areas—report more violence against their health care workforce. During an ongoing workforce shortage, offering a workplace free from preventable violence is essential to recruit and retain staff.

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<sup>1</sup> [2020 Healthcare Crime Survey \(iahssf.org\)](https://www.iahssf.org/)

We all play a role in ensuring Maryland hospitals are safe places of hope and healing. Hospitals are committed to protecting their staff, patients, and visitors. MHA is part of a coalition advocating for a one-time \$2-million investment to implement a [workplace violence public awareness campaign](#) as recommended by the Maryland Health Care Commission's work group. The University of Vermont Medical Center created a [powerful video](#) elevating the voices of impacted health care workers. Maryland needs consistent messaging to emphasize the importance of demonstrating civility toward the health care workforce while performing their duties and providing care.

We thank the sponsor for introducing HB 547, which sends a strong message that violence against our health care workers will not be tolerated in Maryland.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on HB 547.

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