

# **hb 547\_Workplace Safety\_Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Allison Taylor

Position: FAV



Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc  
2101 East Jefferson Street  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building Room 240  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB 547 – Support**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to support HB 547, “Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act).” Kaiser Permanente is the largest private integrated health care delivery system in the United States, delivering health care to over 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, which operates in Maryland, provides and coordinates complete health care services for over 825,000 members. In Maryland, we deliver care to approximately 475,000 members.

Unfortunately, workplace violence is a concerning reality for many health care workers, with statistics reflecting a significant risk:

- Healthcare workers are five times more likely to experience workplace violence than employees in all other industries.
- Nearly 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence in 2018 occurred in healthcare.
- A meta-analysis found 62.4% of healthcare professionals experienced workplace violence: with verbal abuse most common (61.2%), followed by psychological violence (50.8%), threats (39.5%), physical violence (13.7%), and sexual harassment (6.3%).

Workplace violence creates a stressful and unsafe environment for employees. We appreciate the sponsor bringing this important piece of legislation and urge a favorable report.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at [Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org](mailto:Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org) or (202) 924-7496 with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Taylor".

Allison Taylor  
Director of Government Relations  
Kaiser Permanente

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<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Permanente comprises Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plan, and its health plan subsidiaries outside California and Hawaii; the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, which operates 39 hospitals and over 650 other clinical facilities; and the Permanente Medical Groups, self-governed physician group practices that exclusively contract with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and its health plan subsidiaries to meet the health needs of Kaiser Permanente’s members.

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_HB0547.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amanda Kontz Carr

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

JENNIFER AIOSA  
*Director of Government Affairs*

AMANDA KONTZ CARR  
*Legislative Officer*

WILLIAM J. THORNE  
*Legislative Associate*

**BILL NO.:**           **HB 547**

**TITLE:**               **Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities,  
and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

**SPONSOR:**           **Delegate Alston**

**COMMITTEE:**       **Judiciary**

**POSITION:**         **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**               **February 13, 2024**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 547 – Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act). This legislation would make the act of a crime of violence a separate felony if the crime is committed on the property of an educational facility, medical facility, or a place of worship.

As the United States continues to be plagued by an epidemic of gun violence, it is crucial that both State and local government is taking steps to both hold perpetrators of gun violence accountable and protect our communities. The influx of mass casualty events targeting schools, houses of worship, and other community centers is unconscionable. HB 547 would grant prosecutors the ability to pursue additional penalties and longer prison sentences, bringing those responsible for these inhumane crimes to justice.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 547 from the House Judiciary Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at [jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov).

# **2024 HB547 LBH FAV Sacred Spaces Protection Act .p**

Uploaded by: Amanda Shrout

Position: FAV



HB547-Sacred Places Safety Act  
House Judiciary – Feb 13, 2024  
Position: **SUPPORT**

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Chairman Clippinger and Judiciary Committee Members,

I am writing and providing testimony in support of HB547. 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. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), approximately 75 percent of workplace assaults reported annually occurred in health care settings. Violence-related injuries are four times more likely to cause health care workers to take time off from work than other kinds of injuries, thereby indirectly hampering provision of patient care. The experience of workplace violence has not only physical consequences, but personal, emotional, and professional consequences as well.

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. We have over 57 employees reported being assaulted 7 times in a one-year period.

ALL personnel are subject to threats 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 who treat 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. Further, threats occur in all health care settings – physician offices, pharmacies, etc. We want to ensure that places that provide critical healthcare services are kept safe for patients and staff.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB547.

Amanda Strout, Director of Patient Care Services

Jennifer Witten, [jwitten2@lifehealth.org](mailto:jwitten2@lifehealth.org)

**HB547\_Marylanders for Patient Rights\_fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anna Palmisano

Position: FAV

## *Marylanders for Patient Rights*

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### **MARYLANDERS FOR PATIENT RIGHTS REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB547: Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

Marylanders for Patient Rights is a leading advocacy group for patients in our state. We join the Maryland Emergency Nurses Association and the American College of Emergency Physicians in strongly supporting all the goals of HB547 in protecting people in educational facilities, medical facilities, and places of worship.

My testimony will focus on protecting patients in medical facilities, which is part of the core mission of Marylanders for Patient Rights. In 2019, Hospital Patient's Bill of Rights was passed unanimously by the Maryland General Assembly, and signed into law by the Governor. HB547 reinforces those rights, in particular, Patient Right #2: The right to be provided care in a safe environment free from all forms of abuse and neglect, including mental, physical, and sexual abuse.

Violence against patients and against medical workers has increased, particularly in the Emergency Department where long waits can lead to anger and frustration. Patients must have a safe place to receive care, and our medical workers must have a safe place to deliver that care. Patients accessing care are in a vulnerable position and should not be subject to any form of abuse in a medical facility, nor should they be afraid to access the medical care they need. HB547 will make committing a crime of violence in a medical facility, educational institution or place of worship, a felony in order to match the seriousness of the crime.

Please provide a favorable report on HB547, and help to protect Maryland patients and medical staff.

Thank you,

*A C Palmisano*

Anna C. Palmisano, Ph.D, Director  
Marylanders for Patient Rights  
palmscience@verizon.net



**HB0547\_ Sacred\_Spaces\_Safety\_Act\_MLC\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0547**  
**Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of**  
**Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Alston

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0547 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Maryland needs to produce much more solar energy than it is currently projected to produce in order to meet its statutory greenhouse gas reduction requirements. There are many barriers to installation of solar that must be removed.

What a world we find ourselves in. There are more guns than people now, and more and more of our children are dying. Families are afraid to worship. Hospitals and schools are not safe spaces.

It is a societal failure at we can't rein this problem in because too many people value their guns more than their families and their neighbors. So, we need this bill to at least make it a felony to commit a crime of violence in or near a school, a medical facility (including hospitals) or a place of worship. That conviction would result in imprisonment of not more than 10 years.

If we can't muster the courage to ban guns entirely, the least we can do for our children and our neighbors is to make the penalty of using one in a safe space very, very costly.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**HB0547\_FAV\_MDACEP\_Crime of Violence - Ed. & Med. F**

Uploaded by: Danna Kauffman

Position: FAV



TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair  
Members, House Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Tiffany T. Alston

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman  
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
410-244-7000

DATE: February 13, 2024

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

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The Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (MDACEP), which represents the interests of emergency physicians and their patients throughout the State of Maryland, **supports** House Bill 547.

Workplace violence is a preventable and significant public health problem. Optimal patient care can be achieved only when patients, health care workers, and all other persons in the emergency department (ED) are protected against violent acts occurring within the department. In 2022, national ACEP conducted a poll of emergency physicians showing that violence in the ED is on the rise and is increasing rates of healthcare worker burnout and harming patient care. Specifically,

- Eighty-five percent of emergency physicians believe the rate of violence experienced in EDs has increased over the past five years, with 45% indicating it has greatly increased.
- Two-thirds of emergency physicians report being assaulted in the past year alone, while more than one-third of respondents say they have been assaulted more than once.
- One-third of emergency physicians who were assaulted resulted in an injury, an increase of 6% since 2018.
- The number of emergency physicians who missed part of or their entire shift has increased by 50% since 2018.
- According to emergency physicians, the lack of punitive consequences has become a larger factor in the rise of violence since 2018.
- Nearly nine in ten emergency physicians agree violence in the ED harms patient care (89%), a 12-percent increase from 2018.
- Violence in EDs is exacerbating the already high rates of healthcare worker burnout and impacting their mental health.
- Emergency physicians and their care teams deserve a support system that prevents these incidents and protects them when they occur.

Pursuing criminal prosecution, when deemed appropriate, against those individuals who threaten and commit violent acts against health care workers is necessary to protect the integrity of the health care system and ensure that individuals will continue to work in these environments. We respectfully request a favorable vote on House Bill 547.

# **HB 547.Crimes of Violence in Schools Churches and**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FAV

**BILL:** House Bill 547  
**TITLE:** Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of  
Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)  
**DATE:** February 13, 2024  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all twenty-four local boards of education, supports House Bill 547.

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE fully supports state and local funding, programs, and policies to ensure that school systems are adopting and implementing high standards for school safety programs and the design and operation of school facilities.

MABE supports federal, State, and local government funding for local public school safety programs, facility upgrades, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe and secure schools and access to an excellent education for all of Maryland's students. At the same time, MABE supports local discretion to adopt programs and policies to maintain and improve school safety and security.

House Bill 547 would strengthen the criminal prosecutorial tools available in those horrific cases in which acts of violence are perpetrated in schools, churches, and medical facilities. MABE firmly believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general. In this context, MABE supports House Bill 547 as enhancing the tools available to prosecutors responding to violent crimes committed in schools.

MABE continues to support legislative and funding initiatives to strengthen school security and provide the maximum amount of school safety assurances for our students – our children. Maryland has a strong record of continuous improvement in student and school safety, and MABE is confident we will continue to do so.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 547.

# **HFAM Testimony HB 547.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joseph DeMattos

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

February 13, 2024

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

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

On behalf of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 547.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state. HFAM is affiliated with the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which is the largest association in the United States representing long-term and post-acute care providers.

House Bill 547 would prohibit a person from committing a crime of violence while the person is in an educational facility, a medical facility, or a place of worship.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, healthcare workers in all settings have faced increased encounters with threats and harassment as they continue to provide quality care. Hostility and aggression towards healthcare professionals has grown over issues such as visitor restrictions and related COVID-19 policies, mask requirements, vaccination, and general misinformation.

Especially considering staffing shortages we already face in healthcare, it is critical that we give our healthcare heroes the support they need so they feel safe while doing their jobs to care for our family, friends, and neighbors.

It is also important that we protect and support our community members who work in and spend time in schools and places of worship. Along with healthcare facilities, these locations are integral for all members of the community to gather, grow, heal, and learn. This legislation will be a step in helping ensure these locations remain safe.

**For these reasons, we request a favorable report on House Bill 547.**

*Submitted by:*

Joseph DeMattos, Jr.  
President and CEO  
(410) 290-5132



# **2024 HB547 Sacred Places SUPPORT Johns Hopkins.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Weber

Position: FAV

**TO:** The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair  
*Judiciary Committee*

**FROM:** Leslie Ford Weber  
*Associate Director, Maryland Government Affairs*

**DATE:** February 9, 2024

**RE:** HB547 Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of  
Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)

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Johns Hopkins supports **HB547 Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)** This bill recognizes the disparate impact of acts of violence on victims and witnesses when they are committed in places of learning, faith and comfort, and healing.

Workplace violence is a particular concern for our employees at all four Johns Hopkins Health System hospitals in Maryland. At our Maryland hospitals, Johns Hopkins has seen increases in reported violent assaults year after year. The most common site is the emergency department, but no area of the hospital is immune. Hundreds of employees are directly affected and the impacts extend to their colleagues and family members.

Our physicians and nurses are trained to enhance their situational awareness of potentially violent settings and to de-escalate heated encounters, yet the number and severity of injury from patients and family members is increasing. Our team members should be able to approach every patient with compassion unmitigated by fear.

Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **HB547**.

# **MD State Council Emergency Nurses Assoc Lisa Tenne**

Uploaded by: Lisa Tenney

Position: FAV



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. <sup>(1)</sup> 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*

Lisa Tenney BSN, RN, CEN, CPHRM, FAEN  
Chair, Government Affairs  
Maryland Emergency Nurses Association  
9226 Bluebird Terrace  
Gaithersburg, MD 20879  
Lctenney@gmail.com  
240-731-2736

Resources:

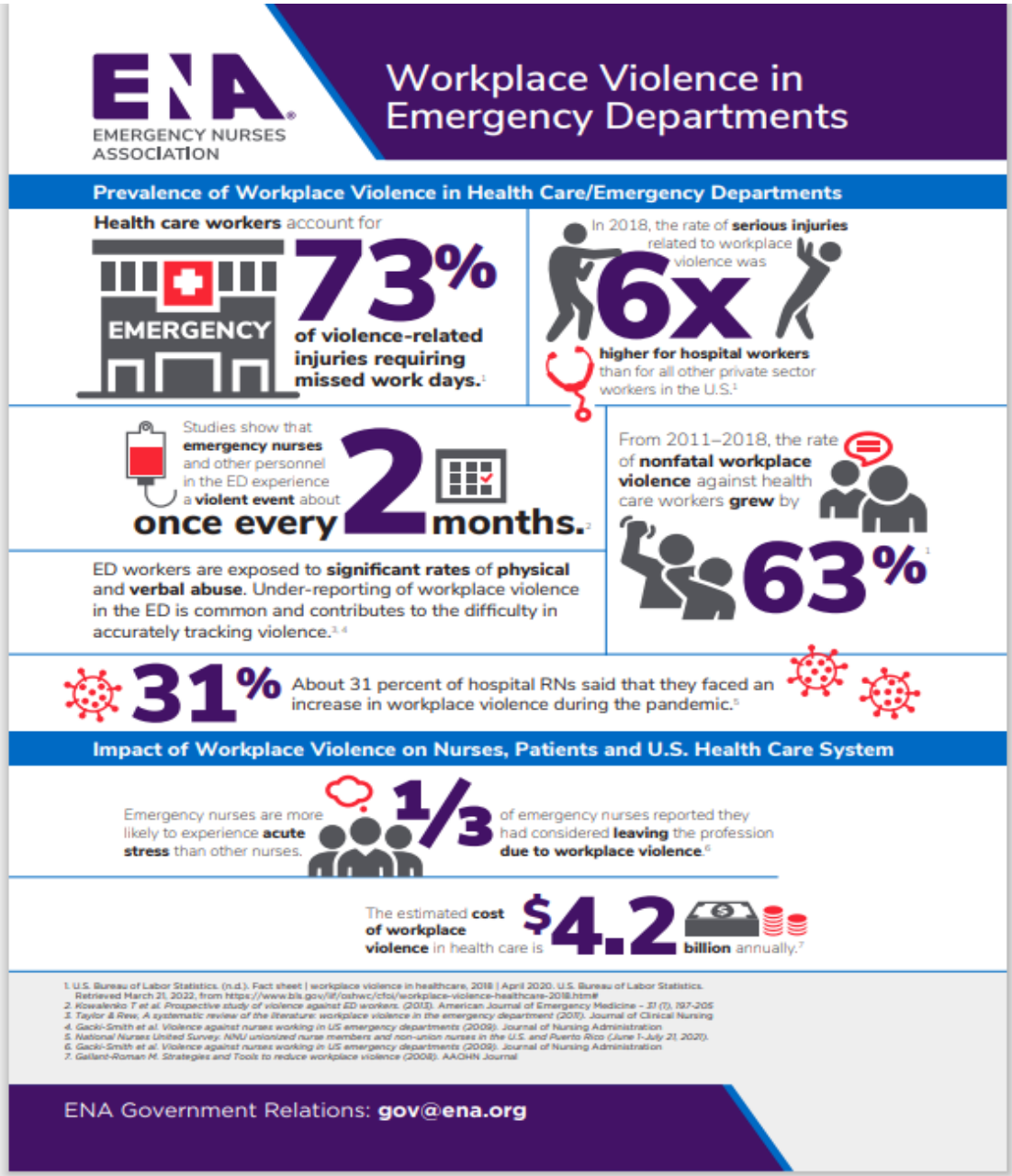
(1) Maryland Patient's Bill of Rights Law. 2019.

**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](mailto: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/>

# **HB 547- Sacred Places Safety Act- Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Pegeen Townsend

Position: FAV



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.

For more information, please contact:  
Pegeen Townsend, Consultant  
Ptownsend@mhaonline.org

# **HB547- Sacred Places Safety Act testimony pdf.pdf**

Uploaded by: Abigail Snyder

Position: FWA

**OFFICERS**

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**MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

Adat Chaim Congregation  
American Jewish Committee  
Americans for Peace Now  
Baltimore Chapter  
American Israel Public Affairs Committee  
American Red Magen David for Israel  
American Zionist Movement  
Amit Women  
Association of Reform Zionists of America  
Baltimore Board of Rabbis  
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation  
Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance  
Baltimore Men's ORT  
Baltimore Zionist District  
Beth Am Congregation  
Beth El Congregation  
Beth Israel Congregation  
Beth Shalom Congregation of  
Howard County  
Beth Tfiloh Congregation  
B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region  
B'nai Israel Congregation  
B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation  
Bolton Street Synagogue  
Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.  
Chevrei Tzedek Congregation  
Chizuk Amuno Congregation  
Congregation Beit Tikvah  
Congregation Tiferes Yisroel  
Federation of Jewish Women's  
Organizations of Maryland  
Hadassah  
Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation  
J Street  
Jewish Federation of Howard County  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish War Veterans  
Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary  
Jewish Women International  
Jews For Judaism  
Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
Hebrew Congregation  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Ner Tamid Congregation  
Rabbinical Council of America  
Religious Zionists of America  
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation  
Shomrei Eemunah Congregation  
Suburban Orthodox Congregation  
Temple Beth Shalom  
Temple Isaiah  
Zionist Organization of America  
Baltimore District

**House Bill 547 - Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities,  
and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)  
Judiciary Committee – February 13, 2024  
Favorable With Amendments**

**Background:** House Bill 547 would create a felony for a person committing a crime of violence while the person is in an educational facility, a medical facility, or a place of worship as defined by this bill, in addition to any other penalty imposed for the underlying crime.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies and the organized Jewish community in Greater Baltimore, including places of worship.

While we appreciate the sponsor's intention with this bill and believe that those who commit crimes of violence in sacred spaces should be held accountable, we would like to bring to the attention of the committee that the definition of "Places of Worship" is not inclusive of our all our community places of worship. To be specific, the bill as drafted defines "Places of Worship" as follows:

**"PLACE OF WORSHIP" MEANS A NONRESIDENTIAL LOCATION WHERE MORE THAN ONE INDIVIDUAL ASSEMBLES FOR PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCE.**

Several small congregations are places of worship within the home of the Rabbi and their family, with the living room being used as the "synagogue" for the community. These can be found across the country. Many of these are Chabad Houses and are located around college campuses to help students feel connected to their Judaism while away from home. These locations are representative of "seeking Judaism wherever you are." For example, [The Rohr Chabad Jewish Center at Towson and Goucher](#) is available for students at both colleges in the home of Rabbi Mendy Rivkin and his wife, Sheiny. There are currently over [40 Chabad Houses across the State of Maryland](#).

To ensure that "Places of Worship" is comprehensive, we ask that the definition be amended so that congregations such as Chabad Houses would be included under the bill. This could be through striking the word "nonresidential," however the Committee may see fit another way to better address this exclusionary language. **For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for these amendments to be considered on HB547.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

# **Testimony HB0547.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zainab Chaudry

Position: FWA



February 13, 2024

Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger  
House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT (With Amendment) of HB0547 Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 547 Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act) with amendment. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Between October 9 – December 2, 2023, my office recorded 223 complaints, hate bias incidents and requests for assistance.<sup>1</sup> As compared to September 2023, the months of October and November saw a four to five-fold increase in the number of reports of incidents and requests for assistance. Of the 109 complaints and requests processed between November 9 – December 2, approximately 32 percent were complaints or reports of hate bias incidents and Islamophobia in schools and colleges/universities, 13 percent were workplace related incidents and concerns, and 17 percent were reports of doxxing or online threats. We also received reports of 5 mosques that were targeted in hate bias incidents, including a bomb threat that was called in to the Idara-E-Jaferia in Silver Spring; a hate demonstration outside of the Islamic Society of Frederick; hate mail delivered to the Maryum Islamic Center in Howard County and a threatening call received at a Baltimore area mosque.

Anti-semitic incidents have also been on the rise. In December, our office condemned a menorah that was discovered toppled outside of a synagogue in Olney.<sup>2</sup> We also extended support to one of four churches in Anne Arundel County that were vandalized in Summer 2023.<sup>3</sup>

My organization supports classifying crimes of violence at educational institutions, houses of worship and hospitals as felonies, with the condition that the crime is found to be motivated by hate bias, in order to a) deter these types of offenses, 2) decrease the frequency of these crimes, 3) promote safety and protect vulnerable or marginalized communities, and 4) to promote swifter investigation and allocation of resources to impacted facilities.

By treating hate motivated crimes in these instances as felonies, law enforcement agencies may allocate more resources to investigate and prosecute these offenses. This can lead to more thorough investigations, quicker apprehension of suspects, and ultimately contributing to safer communities.

A felony classification sends a powerful message that our state values tolerance and rejects acts of bigotry and hate. It reaffirms the fundamental principles of pluralism and underscores the importance of protecting diversity in our state.

I respectfully urge you to give a favorable report with amendments for House Bill 724.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.  
Director, CAIR Office in Maryland  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Email: [zchaudry@cair.com](mailto:zchaudry@cair.com)

1. [https://www.cair.com/press\\_releases/cair-releases-updated-number-of-complaints-bias-incidents-reported-against-maryland-muslims-arabs-in-past-8-weeks/](https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-releases-updated-number-of-complaints-bias-incidents-reported-against-maryland-muslims-arabs-in-past-8-weeks/)
2. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2023/12/08/montgomery-county-synagogue-vandalism/>
3. <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/vandalized-maryland-church-gathers-to-continue-christmas-tradition-of-giving/>

**HB0547-Judiciary\_DRM\_LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Randi Ames

Position: INFO

**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**  
**HOUSE BILL 0547: CRIME OF VIOLENCE - EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES,**  
**MEDICAL FACILITIES, AND PLACES OF WORSHIP - PENALTY**  
**(SACRED PLACES SAFETY ACT)**  
**February 13, 2024**

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the federally designated Protection and Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of community life, and champion their rights to self-determination, dignity, equality, opportunity, and freedom from discrimination and harm.

People with disabilities are dramatically overrepresented in our nation’s criminal justice system, with 40% of people in state prisons having a disability, while only 15% of the US general population having a disability.<sup>1</sup> Prison inmates are four times as likely and jail inmates are more than six times as likely to report a cognitive disability than the general population. Additionally, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 1 in 5 prison inmates have a serious mental illness.<sup>2</sup>

The crimes of violence, as defined under § 14–101, are felonies<sup>3</sup>. HB0547 will make committing one of these felonies in an educational facility, a medical facility, or a place of worship a felony as well, that if convicted for the underlying crime of violence a person may receive up to an additional 10 years that may run consecutive to their sentence. Page 2, lines 5 - 9 of HB0547, states that it will apply to medical facilities under Health – General Article § 10–101 & § 19–114, which includes nursing facilities<sup>4</sup>, a person’s individual home where they receive Medicaid funded in-home aide services<sup>5</sup>, and congregate residential settings providing care to people with mental illness or intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD)<sup>6</sup>.

The educational facilities as well as the home and home-like medical facilities covered under HB0547 creates a risk that peer to peer and student or patient to staff incidences in these settings will result in harsher sentences. Also, HB0547 may inadvertently cause education and medical staff to believe they are obligated to involve police given the heightened status in which this bill places educational and medical facilities.

Many people with behavioral health conditions end up in unnecessary, expensive inpatient care or involved with police – often with tragic consequences. The U.S. Department of Justice’s

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/disability/#:~:text=People%20with%20disabilities%20are%20overrepresent ed,state%20prisons%20have%20a%20disability.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/disabled-behind-bars/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.msccsp.org/Files/Guidelines/MSGM/guidelinesmanual.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> MD Code, Health - General, § 19-301

<sup>5</sup> MD Code, Health - General, § 19-401

<sup>6</sup> MD Code, Health - General, § 19-301, *see* “Related Institutions”



Report of Findings issued to Baltimore City in August 2016 found that the Baltimore City Police Department routinely violated the rights of people with disabilities by using unreasonable force against individuals with disabilities and those in crisis, even when the individual committed no crime or was in restraints.<sup>7</sup> Incarcerating people with mental illness, I/DD, or who are dually diagnosed with a mental illness and I/DD, who need appropriate treatment and support services, mistreats a public health problem through the criminal justice system and cannot be expected to produce positive outcomes. It contributes to race and disability discrimination and tears families and communities apart.

Violent or dangerous behavior in schools, hospitals and places of worship is never acceptable. However, people in crisis should not be deterred from seeking or receiving medical care for fear of police involvement, additional charges, and potentially harsher sentences. Similarly, students with disabilities should not fear greater risk of police involvement simply because they are at school.

Respectfully,

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/883366/dl?inline>