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## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### Testimony in Support of HB 1568

#### Labor and Employment - Health Care Facilities - Workplace Safety (Safe Care Act)

Good afternoon Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais and honorable members of the Economic Matters Committee. I am here to introduce House Bill 1568 **Labor and Employment - Health Care Facilities - Workplace Safety (Safe Care Act)**. This bill seeks to put processes in place to assure the safety of our employees who serve the patients in our state hospitals and residential centers.

This bill is a follow up from the passage of HB 710 Labor and Employment—Nursing Homes and Health Care Facilities – Workplace Safety. That legislation, passed unanimously by the General Assembly, required state hospitals and residential centers to establish joint safety committees including direct service providers and managers which were charged with creating a facility safety plan. Unfortunately implementation of this law has fallen short of its goals. It HB 1568 attempts to put processes in place to improve that implementation.

Let's be clear about one thing—this bill is about assuring safe workplaces. With respect to any incidents, there is no assumption of blame or fault. It simply fine tunes the way we address the very real issue that physical injuries to both employees and patients or residents are occurring in our hospital and other care facilities.

Since the passage of the original legislation, we found that without specific implementation requirements for this safety plan or accountability measures, not enough has been done to keep workers safe in our state hospitals. Additionally, the 2014 law fails to specifically address the number or cause for worker injury in these facilities—patient-on-staff attacks, also known as workplace violence. Statewide, these 12 facilities continue to average a patient-on-staff attack every 1.7 days and safety and workplace violence prevention efforts vary greatly by facility.

HB1568, which only impacts our state hospitals and residential centers, corrects this issue by placing more specific requirements on the content of this safety plan, including:

- A requirement to develop training that specifically addresses workplace violence in conjunction with the other facility safety committees.
- Explicit procedures for responding to and investigating incidents; including making sure that there are procedures in place to provide timely first aid and counseling for workers who have been impacted by the assault.
- Data tracking and maintenance requirements
- And finally, to address the accountability piece HB 1568 requires the MD Dept. of Labor to establish workplace violence regulations and minimum requirements for the engineering controls, work practice controls, and other appropriate measures to prevent and mitigate risk of workplace violence

Some of the testimony you will hear today will be descriptions of incidences which resulted in physical injury. That testimony is designed to define the problem. Our proposed solution to the problem is more clearly defined collaboration processes between management and labor and data analysis so the best possible options for each facility might be identified and implemented. The end result would be a safe environment in which we care for members of our community who are not well or compromised in some way.

There is more we can be doing to keep these health care workers safe; HB 1568 is making sure that universally all the MDH facilities are the doing the basic things that have proven to work in reducing workplace violence.

We hope that you will consider this bill in light of the need for such a program and render a favorable report.