



CARE BRAVELY

HB126 – Peace Orders – Workplace Violence

House Judiciary Committee

January 23, 2020

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development, LifeBridge Health

Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of HB126 – Peace Orders – Workplace Violence. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center, Grace Medical Center, a community hospital (formerly Bon Secours Hospital), and Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital, all in Baltimore City; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; and Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County.

This bill allows an employer to petition for a peace order on behalf of their employees which helps to protect not only the employee who is the subject of the Peace Order, but also other employees in the workplace. This tool complements existing measures that serve to ensure a safe workplace. For example, our employee orientation and annual training include extensive sections about how to avoid workplace violence and if faced with it, how to respond. We encourage environmental awareness and prevention action, ranging from regular review of de-escalation techniques to encouraging escorts around campus. Managers regularly address the issue with their employees and review any incidences of workplace violence that arise.

Violence in the workplace is also related, either directly or indirectly, to violence in our surrounding communities. LifeBridge Health has established a Comprehensive Violence Prevention and Intervention Program – one of the first of its kind in the nation -- to address community violence and trauma throughout the lifespan. Our evidence-based programs include a nationally accredited children's advocacy center addressing child abuse, two domestic violence programs, a multidisciplinary elder abuse program, and two street violence programs, Safe Streets and a hospital-based violence interruption program. Together, these trauma response programs provide wraparound mental health, medical, legal, job training, and ongoing case management support to our region's most vulnerable citizens.

We are committed to empowering our employees through, increased security and support from hospital leadership. However, there are limits on how we can protect them legally if an employee is reluctant to move forward with requesting a peace order for fear of having his or her name and address included in the public record. By allowing the employer to file for a peace order on behalf of the employee, we can protect the affected employees and by extension, the workplace. We appreciate the intent of HB126 highlighting the need for a legal remedy to protect our employees. We support amendments submitted by the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) ensuring the peace order extends to cover the workplace and shields employees' address by requiring the employer's address to be submitted instead.

For all the above reasons, I urge you to help us help our employees by giving HB126 a FAVORABLE report with MHA's amendments.