



Maryland  
Hospital Association

## House Bill 126 – Peace Orders- Workplace

**Position: *Support***

January 23, 2020

House Judiciary Committee

### **MHA Position**

Maryland's 61 nonprofit hospitals and health systems care for millions of people each year, treating 2.3 million in emergency departments and delivering more than 67,000 babies. The 108,000 people they employ are [caring for Maryland](#) around-the-clock every day—delivering leading edge, high-quality medical service and investing a combined \$1.75 billion in their communities, expanding access to housing, education, transportation, and food.

While hospitals are places of health, healing and hope, they are not immune from workplace violence, which occurs daily in health care settings nationwide.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates that 75% of reported workplace violence occurs in health care or social service settings.<sup>i</sup> A 2018 survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians found 47% of emergency physicians have been physically assaulted at work, and 71% witnessed an assault.<sup>ii</sup> Violence in the workplace often leads to higher staff turnover, lost productivity, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale and burnout.<sup>iii</sup>

Maryland's hospitals use innovative practices to prevent and address workplace violence. These include physical modifications, such as improved lines of sight; investments in technology to strengthen security; and hospital policy changes. Additionally, hospitals support employees affected by workplace violence—offering transportation and accompaniment to court and peer-to-peer support programs—to ensure employees feel protected. However, despite these measures, when workplace violence does occur, hospitals are limited in how they can protect their employees legally.

**HB 126 offers an additional tool to protect employees and the workplace from violent individuals who threaten to return to the hospital to cause harm.** Health care workers are often reluctant to report cases of workplace violence, and even more reluctant to pursue legal actions, such as petitioning for a peace order. By allowing the employer to step in to petition on an employee's behalf, hospitals can further protect their employees. It is important to note that violence in hospitals often affect multiple employees. As an employer, our goal is to protect all employees affected by violence. We appreciate the Judiciary Committee's deliberation on this issue. The Maryland Hospital Association stands ready to work with the sponsor and committee to provide additional insight as the bill progresses through the legislative process. We are committed to protecting our employees and preserving a safe workplace for staff, patients and the community.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report.

Peace Orders- Workplace Violence  
January 23, 2020  
Page 2

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<sup>i</sup> The Joint Commission. (April 17, 2018). Sentinel Event Alert: Physical and Verbal Violence Against Health Care Workers. [https://www.jointcommission.org/-/media/tjc/idev-imports/topics-assets/workplace-violence-prevention-implementing-strategies-for-safer-healthcare-organizations/sea\\_59\\_workplace\\_violence\\_4\\_13\\_18\\_finalpdf.pdf](https://www.jointcommission.org/-/media/tjc/idev-imports/topics-assets/workplace-violence-prevention-implementing-strategies-for-safer-healthcare-organizations/sea_59_workplace_violence_4_13_18_finalpdf.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>iii</sup> Milman Research Report. (July 26, 2017). Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association. <https://www.aha.org/system/files/2018-01/community-violence-report.pdf>