



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 105- Peace Orders - Workplace Violence

Position: *Support*

January 28, 2021

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 105 - Peace Orders - Workplace Violence.

Hospitals are places of health and healing. Yet, violence occurs every day in health care settings. Of the 25,000 incidents reported across all workplaces annually, 75% occur in the health care or social service facilities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.¹ The risk of being a victim of workplace violence sadly is at least 20% higher for health care workers.² COVID-19 is likely to worsen the problem due to the anxiety and fear it causes.

The pandemic is taking an emotional and physical toll on our health care heroes, who have been saving lives on the front lines of the COVID pandemic for nearly a year. Ninety-three percent of health care workers are stressed, according to 2020 Mental Health America study. Violence also strains individuals and communities. When that violence extends into the workplace, it leads to higher staff turnover, lost productivity, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale, and burnout.^{3,4,5}

As among the largest employers in their communities, Maryland hospitals strive to ensure employees feel protected. Yet, hospitals are limited in how they can legally protect employees on and off their campuses. Many issue trespass notices to individuals, who cause harm and/or threaten to incite violence. Unfortunately, the notice only applies to the hospital grounds and may not result in an arrest by law enforcement if violated. Employees assaulted or threatened at work, who live in the same community as the perpetrator, often fear pursuing legal action. An employee could encounter this individual on public transportation or at the local grocery store.

¹ The Joint Commission. (April 17, 2018). [Sentinel Event Alert: Physical and Verbal Violence Against Health Care Workers](#).

² Ibid.

³ Milliman Research Report. (July 26, 2017). [Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association](#).

⁴ Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine. (July 2020). [Burnout of Healthcare Providers During COVID-19](#).

⁵ Annals of Emergency Medicine. (October 2020). [Healing the Healer: Protecting Emergency Health Care Workers' Mental Health During COVID-19](#).

SB 105 offers an essential tool to protect our health care heroes and their 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 action, such as petitioning for a peace order. By allowing the employer to petition on an employee's behalf, hospitals can better protect their employees. It is important to note that often incidents of violence in hospitals impact multiple employees. As an employer, our goal is to protect all employees affected by violence.

Maryland hospitals are committed to protecting our employees and providing safe havens for staff, patients, and the community. We look forward to working with the Committee to move this important legislation forward to address a long-standing challenge at this critical time. We appreciate the committee's past support on this legislation and ask for a *favorable* report.

For more information, please contact:
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