

**Criminal Law – Felony Second Degree Assault – Emergency Medical Care Workers
House Bill 1110
Before the House Judiciary Committee
March 2, 2021**

POSITION: SUPPORT

The University of Maryland Medical System (“UMMS”) supports House Bill 1110 with amendments offered by the Maryland Hospital Association. UMMS is a thirteen member hospital and health system that employs more than 28,000 people.

This bill is an important measure to promote the safety and well-being of individuals across the state and importantly from UMMS’ perspective, especially in healthcare. Increasingly, sad tales are illustrated in the media of attacks and threats against hospital personnel by disgruntled patients and families. And, the incidence of workplace violence in healthcare settings is on the rise and is pervasive:

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), approximately 75 percent of nearly 25,000 workplace assaults reported annually occurred in health care and social service settings and workers in health care settings are four times more likely to be victimized than workers in private industry. The National Crime Victimization Survey showed health care workers have a 20 percent higher chance of being the victim of workplace violence than other workers. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data show that violence-related injuries are four times more likely to cause health care workers to take time off from work than other kinds of injuries. The Joint Commission’s Sentinel Event data show 68 incidents of homicide, rape, or assault of hospital staff members over an eight-year period.

Alarming, the actual number of violent incidents involving health care workers is likely much higher because reporting is voluntary. Researchers at Michigan State University estimated that the actual number of reportable injuries caused by workplace violence, according to Michigan state databases, was as much as three times the number reported by the BLS, which does not record verbal incidents. *Sentinel Event Alert, Issue 59, April 17, 2018*

Unfortunately, the staff in our health system are not immune to workplace violence. Nor are these types of incidences limited to emergency rooms or psychiatry departments. By way of illustration, an incident at UM Baltimore Washington Medical Center (“BWMC”) highlights the scope of the problem and why UMMS supports expanding the current law. A BWMC nurse was escorting a patient to her room. Without warning or provocation, the patient stuck the employee twice in the face, causing a concussion. The employee was out of work for nearly 18 months and still is frightened. Two of my security staff were assaulted by a patient. The patient bit one officer on the arm and head butted the other officer. Both officers were out of work for an extended period. On another occasion, a patient did not like the looks of a male nurse. The patient came out of his room and violently attacked the male nurse. It took several of my security staff to gain control of the patient. Violent assaults are not restricted to the Emergency Department or Psychiatry. Staff in hospital are assaulted on every unit, including Labor and Delivery.

Medical professionals and healthcare personnel, especially in hospitals, are extremely vulnerable. Hospital workers have a public schedule and work in an environment that is open to the public. Our workers are frightened and often have no meaningful recourse with any teeth or a means to prevent these occurrences from recurring. For these reasons, the University of Maryland Medical System urges a favorable report on HB

1110, and recommends that this bill is broadened beyond just emergency providers to protect all health care providers.

Respectfully Submitted,

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