



Maryland SHRM State Council, Inc.



Testimony in Support of HB0289/SB0105

“Peace Orders – Workplace Violence”

Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee

January 14th

Members of the Committee.

My name is Greta Engle and I’m testifying on behalf of Maryland Society for Human Resource Management State Council, Inc.

We strongly support HB0289/SB0105. If enacted into law, would provide employers standing to seek a peace order to protect an employee and others in their organizations from an imminent threat of harm while at the workplace.

Maryland SHRM represents more than 7,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) across the state. HR

Professionals are intimately aware of the threat and realities of workplace violence.

I myself have been a victim of violence in the workplace. My employer wanted to file a Peace Order to help bolster my individual efforts for

protection, but also to extend the same protection to all of their other employees. Under current law, they could not. The workplace is often the target of violence, as it's a known location where the victim is 8-10 hours at a time. This extends danger to all of a victim's coworkers. Workplace violence is the third leading cause of death for healthcare workers, and employees in professional and business services like education, law and media, according to *Injury Facts 2016*¹.

Workplace violence incidents have increased over the past 6 years. In the ongoing pandemic, gun sales have also been surging. To date, at least 11 states have enacted Workplace Restraining Order Laws allowing the employer to apply for a restraining order prohibiting acts of violence at the employer's workplace. In Maryland the employer does not have standing to seek a peace order if it is aware that one or more of its employees is threatened with imminent harm. We believe enabling a Maryland employer with another tool to protect the health and safety of their workers is common sense legislation.

This bill also is not a mandate on employers. It allows an employer the opportunity to decide whether or not seeking a peace order makes sense

¹ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/work-overview/work-related-fatality-trends/>

for their organization. The bill also provides a safeguard from any civil liability an employer for failure to file a petition on behalf of an employee should an incident occur.

HB0289/SB0105 will bar the aggressor from:

- Entering the workplace.
- Following an employee.
- Contacting the employee by any means.

HB0289/SB0105 would provide employees and their employers with the opportunity to secure the work environment when a potential threat to either or both exists.

Often, HR professionals and employers have first-hand knowledge of an imminent threat of harm, as they are the ones who are charged with terminating employees; HR professionals are the ones who hear complaints from other co-workers, who witness the emotions of a terminated employee and observe the impact that threats of violence have on an employee's performance and attendance in the workplace.

The passage of HB0289/SB0105 would provide employers a way to deter workplace violence from even entering the workplace when they are aware that a threat exists.

MD SHRM strongly urges your favorable consideration of HB0289/SB0105.

Respectfully submitted,

Greta Engle Kessler

MD SHRM Governmental Affairs, Chair