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January 11, 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Healthcare workers are bravely serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic; yet, these same employees continue to face the threat of workplace violence. Across the country and in Maryland, healthcare workers face a higher risk of experiencing workplace violence than in private industry. In fact, healthcare workers face a four (4x) times greater chance of suffering violent acts while at work than others in private industry. This includes physical attacks and threats of assault. This is simply unacceptable, and I am urging you to act decisively on the Peace Order Bill (SB 105/HB 289) to protect our healthcare workers, as well as patients and families, from violence in our hospitals and healthcare settings. This has been a serious problem that continues to escalate, and something must be done.

I am proud to represent more than 1,200 CalvertHealth employees who face workplace violence at the hands of those we are trying to serve. At CalvertHealth Medical Center alone in the last three years, we have seen a 66 percent increase in verbal confrontations where an incident with a patient was escalating and security was needed. Emergency responses increased by 123 percent in that same three-year period in which a physical altercation was taking place and required security intervention.

Two incidents in October of this year bring to mind the urgency of this matter. A patient arriving at CalvertHealth via ambulance came into the Emergency Room yelling, cursing, and verbally threatening staff. Security was called, and the patient later struck a security guard in the face with a closed fist causing injury to the security guard. Earlier that same month, a female patient attempted to leave her room in the Emergency Department. Upon trying to leave, the patient was asked to return to her room by a nurse. The patient then struck the nurse.

This can no longer be allowed to continue. At a time when healthcare workers are already under stress caring for patients with COVID-19, I urge you to take action on the Peace Order Bill to stop this violence and demonstrate your commitment to our healthcare employees.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dean Teague', is written over a white background.

Dean Teague FACHE
President and CEO
Calvert Health System

