



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**House Bill 1389 - Maryland Department of Health - Prevent Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings Public Awareness Campaign Workgroup**

**Position: *Support***

March 16, 2022

House Health & Government Operations 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 House Bill 1389.

Maryland is facing a staggering health care workforce crisis with more than one in every five hospital positions being vacant. At the same time, our remaining staff, after over two years on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, sadly face a rise in workplace violence.

Well before the pandemic, violence against health care workers reached alarming levels. Nonfatal workplace violence against health care workers spiked since 2011—accounting for 73% of all nonfatal violent injuries and illnesses in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The situation has just gotten worse over the last two years. Violence in the workplace takes a toll and adds to staff turnover, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale, and burnout.<sup>2</sup>

Hospitals' top priority is the safety of patients, staff, and visitors. Hospitals proactively improve safety measures. They equip staff to avoid confrontations and to get help quickly when needed, they deploy de-escalation teams led by social workers rather than security personnel, and more.

Despite these efforts, health care workers continue to report being kicked, bitten, spit at, and threatened. These actions—aimed at doctors, nurses, techs, front desk clerks, security guards and others—are simply unacceptable. The precipitous shift from lauding health care heroes no more than a year ago to a demonstrated lack of respect today should give us all pause. Hospitals should be safe places of health, hope, and healing where staff can focus on delivering care and supporting the needs of patients and their families.

Ensuring the physical and emotional safety of hospital staff and care teams is as crucial to care delivery as any issue before the General Assembly. HB 1389 offers a public awareness mechanism to support and retain our hospital heroes. We urge a favorable report.

For more information, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (April, 2020). "[Fact Sheet: Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018](#)".

<sup>2</sup> Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association. (July 26, 2017). [Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems](#).