

Thomas A. Kleinhanzl, President & CEO  
Frederick Health  
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Frederick, MD 21701

January 18, 2022

To Delegate Karen Lewis Young  
Maryland House of Delegates, District 3A  
Lowe House Office Building, Room 416  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 267: "Criminal Law – Threat Against Public Health Official or Hospital Staff Member"

Dear Delegate Lewis Young:

As an organization that has greater than 3,300 hospital staff members whose mission is to positively impact the well-being of every individual in our community, we write to express our support for House Bill 267: "Criminal Law – Threat Against Public Health Official or Hospital Staff Member."

Frederick Health is committed to evidence-based care and we support our health professionals who have expertise in the delivery of high-quality healthcare. We respect our patients and their right to actively engage and participate in their healthcare decision-making. Patients have a right to disagree, seek a second opinion, or not accept provided healthcare counsel. However, our professionals must be allowed to share their expertise and create a safe environment for other patients and themselves without fear of verbal or physical abuse.

Since 2019, the number of reported verbal assaults directed to hospital staff members has consistently increased each year. Verbal abuse has unfortunately become a daily event since the onset of COVID-19. Staff members have suffered verbal abuse when asking patients or visitors to wear a mask, requesting their vaccination status, or enforcing visitation policy. Frederick Health policies are in alignment with the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Frederick County Health Department, and local physician experts specializing in pulmonary and infectious disease care. Most importantly, these policies are established to protect our most vulnerable patients as well as staff members who routinely face a higher exposure and personal risk to COVID-19.

Action is needed to ensure the protection of healthcare professionals who dedicate their careers to the service of others. Supporting House Bill 267 is important to fostering a safe working environment for hospital staff members as well as ensuring competent professionals will be available to provide help to those in need. Thank you for your leadership and steadfast commitment to protecting our healthcare professionals.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Kleinhanzl  
President & CEO  
Frederick Health