



EMERGENCY NURSES
ASSOCIATION

Maryland State Council
Safe Practice Safe Care

To: Maryland Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee 2021
Miller Senate Office Building
Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

From: Caroline Doyle, BSN, RN, CEN
Immediate Past President, Metro Baltimore Chapter
Maryland State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association

Date: March 14, 2023

Re: **SB 568 Criminal Law-Threat Against State or Local Official – First Responder**
FAVORABLE Oral and written testimony

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldestreicher, and Committee members,

My name is Caroline Doyle, and I am testifying on behalf of The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association in favor of SB 598 Criminal Law-Threat Against State or Local Official – First Responder.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health defines workplace violence as "violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed toward persons at work or on duty." OSHA further reports that even if no physical injury takes place, threats, abuse, hostility, harassment, and other forms of verbal violence can cause significant psychological trauma and stress.¹ Verbal violence often quickly escalates into physical violence. Both types can significantly interfere with saving lives. One simply cannot give CPR to a patient in cardiac arrest and deescalate a loved one who is spewing cuss words and insults and threatening to kill us. At least one team member must stop doing their job to deal with the threat.

As the charge nurse in a large emergency department in Southwest Baltimore along the I-695 and I-95 corridors, I can attest that threats and physical violence directed towards emergency physicians, emergency nurses, and other first responders have increased in frequency and severity over the past three years. This increase has occurred nationally and is being called a national epidemic.²

Threats against first responders in Maryland have been worsened due to Maryland having the longest ER wait times to see a doctor of any state in the nation.³ Maryland is also suffering from a severe shortage of healthcare workers, as documented in the Maryland Hospital Association's 2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce Report.⁴ The long waits for care

make patients and their family members angry and they act out. Threats and violence towards emergency physicians and emergency nurses are one of the documented reasons why first responders have either changed specialties or have just flat-out quit the profession.

Thank you in advance for your favorable review of SB 568 review. Being able to address threats to safety in real time will help the citizens and first responders in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Caroline Doyle
4502 North Woods Trail, Hampstead, Md. 21074
410-292-0570
Rnnuclear@msn.com

References

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3. Maryland Matters. December 8, 2022. Opinion: How can we reduce ER wait times in Maryland hospitals?
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4. Maryland Hospital Association. 2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce Report.
<https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2022-state-of-maryland-s-health-care-workforce-report.pdf>