

Date: March 14, 2023

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

Re: SB 568 Criminal Law – Threat Against State or Local Official – First Responder  
Favorable written and virtual testimony

As an emergency nurse, who serves the citizens of Maryland, I am testifying IN FAVOR of this amendment to protect the sanction of proving care. Being an emergency nurse has proven to be dangerous and we must take threats seriously.<sup>1</sup>

I hold active peace orders against patients because they have threatened the safety of me and my family. One patient threatened to kill me and my son (the fact I am a mother is personal information that was not shared with them). After hearing the threat, I looked into their chart to find the patient lived a block away from me.

After being administratively discharged due to behavior issues, another patient of mine threatened to return to the hospital to “take care of this bitch.” This patient returned to the hospital later that day. Thankfully, he was denied access. It was later revealed that this patient had existing warrants for his arrest for violence against healthcare workers and peace order violations. This incident is proof that these threats are real and should be treated as such.

In a third incident, a patient punched me in the face and bruised my jaw. Another patient kicked me in the chest while I was transferring him to a stretcher. I am verbally harassed on a weekly basis by patients who are dissatisfied with their care. Violence towards me and my coworkers interferes with safe and effective care. It has also caused us to lose staff amidst a severe nursing shortage in Maryland and nationwide.

The process of obtaining a peace order is traumatizing. Like other nurses, I work at different ERs within a Baltimore health system and need to file my own peace orders so I am covered wherever I go. Attending weekly court visits only to discover the offender has not been served or is a no-show, takes time and wears on my mental health. Because the process is arduous and frustrating, many assaults against like colleagues go unreported allowing the perpetrator the opportunity to come back and threaten and hurt others.

I save lives for a living; mine deserves to be protected so I can continue to serve Maryland citizens. SB 568 will provide real time misdemeanor sanctions for threats that occur against first responders.

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<sup>1</sup> See attached Workplace Violence Infographic from Emergency Nurses Association



# Workplace Violence in Emergency Departments

## Prevalence of Workplace Violence in Health Care/Emergency Departments

Workers in the **health care** sector make up about



**50%**  
of all victims of  
workplace assault.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, the rate of **serious injuries** related to workplace violence was **6x** higher for hospital workers than for all other private sector workers in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

Studies show that **emergency nurses** and other personnel in the ED experience a **violent event** about **once every 2 months.**<sup>3</sup>

ED workers are exposed to **significant rates** of **physical** and **verbal abuse**. Under-reporting of workplace violence in the ED is common and contributes to the difficulty in accurately tracking violence.<sup>4,5</sup>

From 2011–2018, the rate of **nonfatal workplace violence** against health care workers **grew** by **63%**<sup>2</sup>

**31%** About 31 percent of hospital RNs said that they faced an increase in workplace violence during the pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

## Impact of Workplace Violence on Nurses, Patients and U.S. Health Care System

Emergency nurses are more likely to experience **acute stress** than other nurses.



**1/3** of emergency nurses reported they had considered **leaving** the profession **due to workplace violence.**<sup>7</sup>

The estimated **cost of workplace violence** in health care is **\$4.2 billion** annually.<sup>8</sup>

1. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), US Department of Labor [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)  
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Fact sheet | workplace violence in healthcare, 2018 | April 2020. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.bls.gov/ia/osha/cfo/workplace-violence-healthcare-2018.html>  
3. Kowalenko T et al. Prospective study of violence against ED workers. (2015). American Journal of Emergency Medicine - 21 (2), 197-205  
4. Taylor & Rew, A systematic review of the literature: workplace violence in the emergency department (2010). Journal of Clinical Nursing  
5. Gacki-Smith et al. Violence against nurses working in US emergency departments (2009). Journal of Nursing Administration  
6. National Nurses United Survey. NNJ unionized nurse members and non-union nurses in the U.S. and Puerto Rico (June 1-July 21, 2021).  
7. Gacki-Smith et al. Violence against nurses working in US emergency departments (2009). Journal of Nursing Administration  
8. Gallant-Roman M. Strategies and Tools to reduce workplace violence (2008). AADHN Journal

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