

Date: March 14, 2023

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 568 Criminal Law-Threat Against State or Local Officer – First Responder

My name is Emily Pepin, I am a Maryland ER Nurse who works in South Baltimore City, Brooklyn Park. I am speaking on behalf of myself. I am in favor of SB 568.

Emergency nurses and physicians, and other first responders are punched, kicked, stabbed, and threatened daily. Some first responders have died from their injuries, and if they don't die, they suffer physical or emotional trauma that drives them away from emergency services. Threats make us scared to walk to our cars after work. Threats make us afraid that a discharged angry patient will linger in the parking lot. This is the behavior we endure while working long hours in an already stressful critical care setting.

My coworkers and I are yelled at, cussed at, and threatened daily. In triage, patients are treated by acuity, not time of arrival. A non-critical woman became upset with me because she had to wait for a few hours. A man then decided to join her and became hostile towards me. He threatened to fight and hurt me physically. While being removed by Security, the patient said he would be back with weapons to harm the ED.

Just last week we had a patient state he was going to "shoot up" the ER. Another discharged patient chased me down the hall. Fortunately, another patient, my coworkers and manager, helped stop the patient. Another patient told me he hoped I got pregnant and miscarried. Threatening events have occurred while we were intubating a two-year old in respiratory failure, and when we were giving CPR and intubating a three-year old. These life-saving actions require several emergency nurses and a physician. When a threatening patient is simultaneously demanding our attention, it distracts us. It interferes with the care of these critical patients.

Think, how would you feel if your child, spouse, or family member was sick in the ER & needed life-saving treatment and there were not enough nurses to help. How would that impact the care given and the health of your loved one? It would delay care and could cause us to make errors. That is exactly what happens when first responders are threatened. Time and attention are taken away from that critical patient.

While a peace order can be obtained after someone threatens to come back and harm us, we can use SB 568 during the actual event. It is simple. If threats and abuse from patients are tolerated, care and length-of-stays worsen, and there will be less first responders.

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