

Marylanders for Patient Rights

MARYLANDERS FOR PATIENT RIGHTS REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT ON SB720 Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans – Establishment The Safe Staffing Act of 2025

Marylanders for Patient Rights is the largest patient advocacy coalition in the state, with 23 groups and a collective membership over a million.

Our coalition has joined with healthcare workers and community organizations to form the **Patient-Worker Collaborative** in support of the Safe Staffing Act of 2025, SB720. Maryland urgently needs to address the **hospital short staffing crisis**.

Maryland has had the longest ER wait time out of 50 states for over nine years, with a state average wait time over four hours (see attached chart for individual hospitals). **Maryland patients lack reliable, timely emergency care.** This problem will never be solved without safe staffing. **Nine other states have already passed a Safe Staffing Act.**

When my 75 year old husband was seriously ill with COVID, I observed two nurses at my local hospital being overwhelmed with about 35 ER patients. He left without treatment after we waited 5 hours. During that time, he was accidentally injured by one of the two nurses, so he left with a large bandage the entire length of his right arm. It became clear to me that an understaffed ER was more dangerous than taking him home.

I started working on the ER wait time issue three years ago after getting an email from a woman who waited **31 hours** in the Carroll Hospital ER with her father who had dementia. I have been a caregiver for a family friend with dementia, and I can only imagine how extremely difficult that was.

Bruce Hartung, President of the Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association, told me that some residents at his retirement community in Montgomery Co. are lining up drivers to take them to Northern Virginia if they need emergency care, because of the lengthy wait times in their local hospitals. Compared to Montgomery Co., Fairfax Co. has a two hour shorter ER wait time and almost 30% more staffed beds.

It's about safe staffing. Marylanders shouldn't have to go to another state for emergency care.

So, why are we the worst? What is different about Maryland?

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Data from *Becker's Hospital Review* show that compared to 50 other states Maryland is:

46th in staffed beds

36th in nurses per 1000 population

45th in nurses' salaries, adjusted for cost of living.

Medical staff have been frustrated by having the **knowledge, but not the voice**, in fixing the short-staffing crisis. SB720 simply requires that each hospital form a safe staffing committee to develop guidelines for a staffing plan. The committee must be at least **50% direct care workers**, so the committee can benefit from their knowledge and experience.

Guidelines will be flexible enough so that the committee can make adjustments based on need. This approach will improve both quality of care and working conditions. Hospitals have precedents in successful management-worker committees on Violence in the Workplace, and Safe Lifting.

However, **MHA opposes SB720 by using false claims** that the bill mandates nurse:patient ratios or lacks flexibility. This is simply not true. Instead, SB720 requires experienced employees and managers to talk to each other about safe staffing and develop guidelines. We have responded to their criticisms last year by deleting 2/3 of the bill, now down to five essential pages.

Without a safe level of staffing the ER, Maryland patients will continue to suffer long and potentially life-threatening waits for emergency care, or leave without the treatment they need.

Please submit a favorable report for SB720, and help keep our patients and workers safe. Thank you.

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Hospital	ER Wait Time, Minutes*
Northwest	367
MedStar Franklin Square	364
Holy Cross Silver Spring	346
Adventist White Oak	346
Grace Medical	301
Johns Hopkins Bayview	300
MedStar Southern Maryland	296
UMMC	293
Holy Cross Germantown	275
Doctor's Community Hospital	270
UM BWMC	270
Johns Hopkins Hospital	269
MedStar St. Mary's	265
UM St. Joseph	263
UM Upper Chesapeake	263
Frederick	261
UM Capital Regional	260
Howard Co. Medical Center	258
St. Agnes	256
Mercy Medical	256
Adventist Ft. Washington	249
Western Maryland Regional	244
MedStar Good Sam	237
Anne Arundel Medical Center	235
GBMC	230
UM Midtown	228
Meritus	227
UM Charles Regional	225
Suburban	222
Carroll	215
Adventist Shady Grove	214
MedStar Union	214
MedStar Montgomery	213
Calverthealth Med Center	210
UM Harford	205
MedStar Harbor	198
Sinai	183
Tidal Health Peninsula Regional	175

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UM Shore at Easton	174
UM Shore at Chestertown	173
Garrett Regional	147
Atlantic	131
average (mean)	246
average (median)	228
*Source: CMS Hospital Compare	

numbers reflect those discharged from the
ER