



EMERGENCY NURSES
ASSOCIATION

Maryland State Council
Safe Practice Safe Care

To: Maryland House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Date: March 5, 2026

Re: HB 1146 Crime of Violence – Medical Facilities and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act) - **FAVORABLE** written and virtual oral testimony

Good day, Chairman Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Committee members,

My name is Lisa Tenney, and I am testifying on behalf of The Maryland Emergency Nurses Association in favor of HB 1146 Crime of Violence – Medical Facilities and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act). Today I want to tell you about two recent assaults that happened in Montgomery County.

The first occurred at a Montgomery County Church in Silver Spring where a disheveled non-parishioner entered the church during a morning service. As the pastor was ending the service, the stranger suddenly attacked him, injuring him in such a way that the pastor was unable to return to his duties for a four-month period, due to multiple orthopedic injuries. To date, no motive was ever found for this devastating attack. The congregation was quite shaken, especially the children in attendance.

The second assault occurred in a Montgomery County hospital Emergency Department (ED) where a psychiatric social worker was in a patient room conducting an admission psychiatric assessment on a new patient. Another patient suddenly came out of his room and sneaked into the new patient's room where he viciously attacked the social worker. He got her in a chokehold, pushed her to the ground, and repeatedly punched her in her head and face with his fists. Other staff responded and pulled the attacker off the social worker. The attack disrupted the entire ED and interfered with the care of others. It prolonged the already long ED wait time that day. Due to a profoundly serious head injury, this social worker was unable to return to her work for eleven months in the ED, and to her private psychiatric practice. Her headaches, blurred and double vision, and inability to concentrate were unbearable.

Both stories demonstrate the erosion of some Americans' respect for one another and for safe havens where worshippers and patients expect to be free from harm. In my lifetime I have witnessed a definite culture change in America where many citizens cross boundaries and often righteously and indiscriminately ignore and invade others' privacy. Maybe they forget that the constitution provides for freedom of religion. Maybe they do not know that the Maryland Patient's Bill of Rights provides patients with a RIGHT to be safe in hospitals. One of those rights reads: **Be provided care in a safe environment free from all forms of abuse and neglect, including verbal, mental, physical, and sexual abuse.** (1) These rights need to be supported by the strictest consequences for those who endanger vulnerable patients who are receiving medical care.

Thank you to the sponsors for this commonsense bill that supports **ZERO TOLERANCE** for violence in medical facilities and places of worship, setting them apart as "sacred places." Maryland's emergency nurses ask this committee to favorably pass HB 1146 and to send it along to the Senate. Thank you in advance for a favorable bipartisan review.

Respectfully,

Lisa Tenney

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Resources:

(1) Maryland Patient's Bill of Rights Law. 2019.