



Maryland  
Hospital Association

**Senate Bill 555: Peace Orders – Workplace Violence**  
**Position: Support**

**Bill Summary**

SB 555 authorizes an employer to file a petition for a peace order that alleges the commission of specified acts against the petitioner's employee at the employee's workplace. It extends existing statutory provisions relating to the filing, issuance, and modification of peace orders, as well as the shielding of related court records, to peace orders filed by employers on this basis. An employer is immune from any civil liability that may result from the failure of the employer to file a petition for a peace order on behalf of an employee.

**MHA Position**

Every day the women and men who work at Maryland's hospitals offer their patients compassionate, professional care. In places that are dedicated to helping others heal, it's especially jarring to recognize that these hospital associates are too often in serious danger.

Consider these national statistics: in 2014, more than half of all the workplace violence incidents reported to the Bureau of Labor Statistics took place in a health care setting. More than half of nurses and nursing students have been verbally assaulted, with another 20 percent enduring physical assault. These statistics run counter to our calling as hospital and community leaders to provide a safe environment for caregivers to give care.

Protecting associates from the dangers of workplace violence is a key priority for the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 62 member hospitals and health systems. That is why, in 2018, MHA and the Maryland Nurses Association formed the Workplace Violence Prevention Steering Committee that we expect will produce actionable measures to enhance workplace safety.

Through that work, the expansion of the Peace Order was identified as a key tool that employers need to assist employees. A Peace Order — similar to a protective order — is a form of legal protection that requires a person to stay away and refrain from contact with another person, including a romantic partner, a neighbor, a stranger, or anyone else.

Maryland's hospitals are dedicated to supporting and protecting their employees — both inside and outside of their four walls. SB 555 helps to further that goal by allowing employers to file a Peace Order on behalf of an employee — providing legal protections from an assailant — while also providing important civil immunity that protects the employer.

Several other states have, rightly, proposed or enacted similar laws that allow employers to apply for restraining orders to prevent violence, harassment, or stalking of their employees.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, *State Law Guide Workplace Restraining Orders*, <https://www.legalmomentum.org/sites/default/files/reports/workplace-restraining-orders.pdf>

SB 555, like these bills, seeks to ensure all Marylanders feel safe and secure in the workplace. This is central to the mission of the state's hospital field, which is dedicated to supporting health care and the health of all Marylanders.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the committee give **SB 555 a *favorable* report.**