



Maryland  
Hospital Association

## House Bill 126 – Peace Orders- Workplace

**Position: Support**

January 23, 2020

House Judiciary Committee

### **MHA Position**

Maryland's 61 nonprofit hospitals and health systems care for millions of people each year, treating 2.3 million in emergency departments and delivering more than 67,000 babies. The 108,000 people they employ are [caring for Maryland](#) around-the-clock every day—delivering leading edge, high-quality medical service and investing a combined \$1.75 billion in their communities, expanding access to housing, education, transportation, and food.

Incidences of workplace violence occur every day in health care settings, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates that 25,000 incidences are reported annually, 75% of which occur in the health care or social service setting<sup>i</sup>. According to a 2018 survey conducted by the American College of Emergency Physicians, 47% of emergency physicians reported having been physically assaulted at work and 71% had witnessed an assault<sup>ii</sup>. When violence extends into the workplace, the effects can be seen in increased staff turnover, lost productivity, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale and burnout<sup>iii</sup>.

Maryland's hospitals have been incorporating innovative practices to prevent and address incidences of workplace violence. These include physical changes, such as unit modifications to improve lines of sight, investments in technology to improve security and hospital policy changes. Additionally, when an incident of workplace violence does occur, hospitals support their employees by providing transportation and accompaniment to court and offering peer to peer support programs. Every effort is being made to ensure employees feel protected. However, despite these measures, when an incident of workplace violence does occur, hospitals are limited in how they can protect their employees legally.

**HB 126 offers an additional tool to protect employees and the workplace from violent individuals who threaten to return to the hospital to cause harm.** Health care workers are often reluctant to report cases of workplace violence, and even more reluctant to pursue legal actions, such as petitioning for a peace order. By allowing the employer to step in to petition on an employee's behalf, hospitals can further protect their employees. It is important to note that often incidence of violence in hospitals impact multiple employees. As an employer, our goal is to protect all employees who may have suffered as a result of the violent incident. We appreciate the Judiciary committee's deliberation on this issue. The Maryland Hospital Association stands ready to work together with the sponsor and committee to provide additional insight as the bill progresses through the legislative process. We are committed to protecting our employees and preserving a safe workplace for staff, patients and the community.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report.

For more information, please contact:  
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<sup>i</sup> The Joint Commission. (April 17, 2018). Sentinel Event Alert: Physical and Verbal Violence Against Health Care Workers. [https://www.jointcommission.org/-/media/tjc/idev-imports/topics-assets/workplace-violence-prevention-implementing-strategies-for-safer-healthcare-organizations/sea\\_59\\_workplace\\_violence\\_4\\_13\\_18\\_finalpdf.pdf](https://www.jointcommission.org/-/media/tjc/idev-imports/topics-assets/workplace-violence-prevention-implementing-strategies-for-safer-healthcare-organizations/sea_59_workplace_violence_4_13_18_finalpdf.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> American College of Emergency Physicians. (September, 2018). 2018 ACEP Emergency Department Violence Poll Results. <http://www.acep.org/administration/violence-in-the-emergency-department-resources-for-a-safer-workplace/>

<sup>iii</sup> Milman Research Report. (July 26, 2017). Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association. <https://www.aha.org/system/files/2018-01/community-violence-report.pdf>