



Maryland  
Hospital Association

March 2, 2021

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Re: Letter of Information- House Bill 1110 - Criminal Law - Felony Second-Degree Assault -  
Emergency Medical Care Workers

Dear Chair Clippinger:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1110.

Hospitals are places of health and healing. Yet, violence occurs every day in health care settings. Of the 25,000 incidents reported across all workplaces annually, 75% occur in the health care or social service facilities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.<sup>1</sup> A survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians found 47% of emergency physicians reported being physically assaulted at work, and 71% witnessed an assault.<sup>2</sup> Violence in the workplace leads to increased staff turnover, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale, and burnout.<sup>3</sup>

We appreciate the intent of HB 1110, which seeks to impose greater consequences for harming an emergency medical care worker. However, incidences of violence can occur throughout the hospital. A 2019 MHA survey showed behavioral health, medical surgical, labor and delivery, and critical care units were also affected by violence.

Comprehensively addressing workplace violence requires a diverse, multidisciplinary group of stakeholders to think through innovative solutions. Instead of using a felony as a legal remedy, for example, it may be worthwhile to explore alternatives. The Kentucky state legislature, for example, passed a bill to establish a fourth-degree assault charge for violence against an emergency department worker. This allows a police officer to arrest an individual if he or she causes harm in the emergency department, even if the police officer does not witness the event.

We appreciate the sponsor and chairman's attention to this critical issue and look forward to working together to explore how changes in the law can better protect our health care workers.

For more information, please contact:

Jennifer Witten, Vice President, Government Affairs  
Jwitten@mhaonline.org

<sup>1</sup> The Joint Commission. (2018). Sentinel Event Alert: Physical and Verbal Violence Against Health Care Workers. [Physical and Verbal Violence Against Health Care Workers.](#)

<sup>2</sup> American College of Emergency Physicians. (September, 2018). 2018 ACEP Emergency Department Violence Poll Results. [Violence in the Emergency Department: Resources for a Safer Workplace.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association. (July 26, 2017). [Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems.](#)