



Maryland  
Hospital Association

March 9, 2021

To: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chair, House Economic Matters Committee

Re: Letter of Concern - House Bill 1171 Labor and Employment - Maryland Employee Protection Plan for Vaccine Refusal

Dear Chair Davis:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60-member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1171.

Maryland hospitals, as places of health and healing, are committed to protecting the health and well-being of patients and staff. Late last year, when COVID-19 vaccines became available, hospital workers were prioritized and were among the first Marylanders to be vaccinated. Hospitals have not required employees to receive the vaccine since it was approved under emergency use. Instead hospitals are focused on building trust and having conversations to increase uptake among health care workers.

Hospitals share information and tap experts to talk with employees one-on-one about the vaccine. We've found some who originally passed on the opportunity to receive the vaccine are now more willing. Ensuring health care workers have more confidence in the vaccine also allows them to become vaccine advocates when talking with patients.

For most health care workers, an annual flu shot is compulsory, as are immunizations for measles, mumps, chickenpox, and other infectious diseases. These requirements were put in place after careful deliberation and communication to staff and include a process for medical and religious exceptions. The aim is to protect the lives and welfare of patients and health care workers.

While our hospitals are not currently contemplating mandating vaccines, we have concerns with the length of this prohibition under HB 1171. HB 1171 will prohibit an employer from mandating an employee take the COVID-19 vaccine for a period of 2 years. Vaccinating health care workers is an important step to provide additional protection from the serious consequences of COVID-19. This is true currently and will certainly be true well into the future. For these reasons we urge an unfavorable report.

For more information, please contact:

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