



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 11, 2020

Senate Bill 846: Peace Orders – Workplace Violence

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senator Sydnor, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 846: Peace Orders – Workplace Violence.

This legislation would authorize 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. The employer must notify the employee before filing for the peace order. 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. An employer may not retaliate against an employee who does not provide information for or testify at a peace order proceeding.

MRHA’s mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland. Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland’s land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland’s 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that “many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitation, and economic development infrastructure.” (West’s Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

This legislation would strengthen health care delivery by providing a means to increase the safety of health care workers in the workplace. Health care workers are at high risk for verbal and physical abuse. According to OSHA, workplace violence affecting health care and social service workers accounts for approximately 70% of workplace occurrences.

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3148.pdf>

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