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Testimony in Support of SB 846
“Peace Orders – Workplace Violence”
Submitted to the Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee
March 11, 2020

I am writing to ask for your support of SB 846, Peace Orders – Workplace Violence. As a human resources and employment law consultant, I have been honored to work with a number of organizations over nearly the last 20 years to advance the purpose behind this bill, preventing workplace violence. We first ventured onto this path in 2001 with HB 1298, Peace Orders for Acts Committed Against Employees. At that time, we heard one employee’s story. She came to her HR department seeking protection. A third party was threatening to come to the workplace and harm her. She was afraid and asked the employer to help protect her. The employer went to court to seek a peace order. The judge denied the employer’s request, noting that the employer did not have standing to seek the peace order. The threat was not being made against the employer, at least not directly. It was being made against the employee. The judge said the employee must petition the court directly. Therein lies the challenge; the employee was too frightened to do so. That’s why she asked her employer for help. So, not only was the employee still at risk, so was the entire workforce. Hers was not an isolated incident.

- In 1996, an employee of Proctor and Gamble in **Hunt Valley, MD** was shot in her car on the company’s parking lot by her former fiancée (*Baltimore Sun, 1/31/00*).
- On September 18, 2000 the **Baltimore County** Police Department reported receiving a number of calls from companies in the same area about employees “receiving threats at work from a family member or acquaintance.” (*Baltimore Sun, 9/18/00*).
- On October 18, 2017 three employees were killed by a coworker at a granite countertop maker in **Edgewood, MD**. A peace order that had previously been sought against the coworker had been deniedⁱ.
- Most of us have the painful memory of June 28, 2018 when five people were shot in the workplace of the **Annapolis Gazette**.
- *On May 31, 2019, in Virginia Beach city government offices, an employee who reportedlyⁱⁱ felt he had been treated unfairly in a performance review, shot 16 coworkers; 12 died, four were severely injured.
- *And, just since we testified in the House Committee a few weeks ago, on at the Molson Coors facility in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Five people were shot; five people were killed.
- Sadly, the list goes on.

**These reports are new and were not included in my prior testimony before the House Judicial Proceedings Committee.*

It has been my honor to work the Maryland SHRM State Council, Inc. (MD SHRM) and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce on this matter for nearly twenty years. We first proposed this legislation in Maryland in 2001. We were not the first. At that time, at least seven (7) states had already enacted related legislationⁱⁱⁱ. Unfortunately, our efforts were unsuccessful.

We revisited the issue in 2006 with HB 1210, the Maryland Workplace Violence Protection Act. In the preceding five years, at least six (6) more states had proposed or enacted related legislation.^{iv} Again, we were again unsuccessful.

Now, fast forward to today. Just last month, on December 17, 2019 the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that “violence and other injuries by persons...increased 3 percent in 2018” and totaled 453.^v These outcomes are the result of not just shootings but other bad acts, using other weapons. We need to act now.

So, here we are, 19 years later and we are again and still asking for your help and support to provide Maryland employers with one more tool to help provide a safe workplace. Please support SB 846.

Feel free to contact me if I can provide any more information or answer any questions you may have. Until then, I look forward to hearing of your vote in favor of SB 846.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine V. Walters

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ⁱ <https://www.esrcheck.com/wordpress/2017/10/20/suspect-in-shootings-at-maryland-business-had-history-of-workplace-violence/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/vp-nw-hillard-heintze-response-0304-20200304-ehygsiasozce7orsb7w2n7ngye-story.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Arizona, Arkansas, California, Georgia, New Jersey, New York & Oklahoma.

^{iv} Alaska, Colorado, Indiana, Nevada, Rhode Island & Tennessee.

^v <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf>