



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee
Bill Number: House Bill 612
Title: Labor and Employment – Health Care Facilities – Workplace Safety Programs - Revisions
Hearing Date: March 2, 2020
Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *House Bill 612 – Labor and Employment – Health Care Facilities – Workplace Safety Program – Revision* with amendments. To address workplace violence in health care facilities, the bill provides that: 1) health care staff may elect not to care for a patient who has threatened or assaulted them; and 2) workplace safety committees report to the Governor and the General Assembly on aggregate data on threats and information about lockdowns, evacuations, or other emergency responses.

MNA’s top policy priority is to address workplace violence in health care settings. To advance this work, we have established a Workplace Violence Prevention Collaborative with the Maryland Hospital Association. Through the Collaborative, we are identifying and promoting best practices to reduce the threat of workplace violence in health care settings.

In on our workplace violence prevention work, it is imperative that we utilize all available data so that we understand the scope of the issue. HB 612 presents an opportunity to focus discussion on one of our primary data challenges. Hospitals and other employers are already required to report workplace violence data to the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH). If the MOSH data were available to the health care community to analyze, we could better measure the scope of the workplace violence issue and tailor our prevention strategies.

Therefore, we would ask the Committee to consider HB 612 with the following amendments:

- **Reporting Requirements:** The bill delineates new reporting requirements for health care facilities. We recommend removing the new reporting requirements as such requirements may be costly and duplicative of the data already provided to MOSH. We recommend that the bill be revised to require MOSH to regularly report aggregate data on workplace violence in health care settings. The bill should require MOSH to consult with stakeholders on how to structure the report.

- **Removing Health Care Staff from a Threat:** The bill would allow health care staff to elect not to care for a patient who assaulted or threatened them. MNA would ask that this provision to be removed from the bill because it violates the code of ethics for nurses. Nurses cannot singularly elect to leave their patients, as this could jeopardize the safety of a patient and the remaining care team. Nurses can work with their employers to be removed from a patient's care team if the circumstances warrant it.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we are committed to working with the committee on this legislation and other measures to address workplace violence in health care facilities. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.