



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 16, 2022

**HB1389 - Maryland Department of Health - Prevent Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings
Public Awareness Campaign Workgroup**

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 1389.

It is not an exaggeration to say many of us owe our lives to our healthcare workers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our turn to protect these healthcare workers from injury, violence, abuse.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), approximately 75 percent of the workplace assaults reported annually occurred in health care settings. Workers in health care settings are four times more likely to be victims of workplace violence than workers in other settings. Further, because workplace violence is grossly underreported, the actual number of violence incidents against healthcare workers is estimated to be much higher. The experience of workplace violence has not only physical consequences, but personal, emotional, and professional consequences as well.

Although hospitals and other care providers are actively working to prevent workplace violence, such as electronic systems for reporting and tracking incidences of workplace violence, implementing zero-tolerance policies, providing training on de-escalation techniques, increasing security, and disseminating personal wearable safety alarms, this violence is still increasing.

House Bill 1389 would require a workgroup to establish a public awareness campaign to prevent workplace violence in healthcare settings. This workgroup would provide the public with information on:

1. The magnitude of the incidence of workplace violence in health care settings in Maryland;
2. The consequences of the workplace violence in health care settings in Maryland;
3. The need for the public to respect and protect Maryland's health care providers from workplace violence; and
4. The need to recognize and accommodate the needs of patients with mental health, substance abuse, and disabilities.

The workgroup would also develop a plan for how to distribute the campaign message.

Our health care providers were lauded as health care heroes and celebrated at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but today they need our help. Violence is contributing to the burnout of health care professionals who are then leaving the profession or changing practice locations.

Violence against health care workers should not be accepted or tolerated as “just part of the job”. Having an increased public awareness of the magnitude of, and consequences associated with, workplace violence in health care settings would help combat this phenomenon and provide the support our health care providers need and deserve.

I request a favorable report on House Bill 1389.