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HB 1389 – Maryland Department of Health – Prevent Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings Public Awareness Campaign Workgroup

Position: *Support*

March 16, 2022

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Summary

HB 1389 would require the Maryland Department of Health to convene a workgroup to develop a public awareness campaign to prevent workplace violence in health care settings. The campaign 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.

Rationale

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), approximately 75 percent of nearly 25,000 workplace assaults reported annually occur in health care and social service settings, and workers in health care settings are four times more likely to be victimized than workers in other industries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that violence-related injuries are four times more likely to cause health care workers to take time off from work than other kinds of injuries. Violence against health care workers occurs in virtually all settings, with the emergency department and inpatient psychiatric settings having the most recorded incidents.

Alarming, the actual number of violent incidents involving health care workers is likely much higher, because episodes of workplace violence are grossly underreported. Health care has several unique cultural factors that may contribute to underreporting or acceptance of workplace violence. For example, caregivers feel a professional and ethical duty to “do no harm” to patients. Some will put their own safety and health at risk to help a patient, and many health care professionals consider violence to be “part of the job.”

Protecting associates from the dangers of workplace violence is a key priority for MedStar Health. As a result, in 2017, MedStar Health established a Workplace Violence Prevention Committee. The Committee has:

- Developed and implemented a systemwide electronic system for reporting incidences of workplace violence;
- Developed a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence;
- Trained over 2,400 associates working in three high-risk areas (security, behavioral health, and emergency department) in de-escalation and physical skills;
- Implemented a new mandatory training module for all 36,000 associates on what efforts MedStar Health is undertaking to ensure the safety of associates and patients;

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It’s how we treat people.

- Beginning in September 2019, de-escalation training for over 12,000 associates whose responsibilities place them in a position of dealing directly with patients, visitors, and other members of the community;
- Produced and distributed the video to educate all associates on MedStar Health’s Active Shooter – Code Silver policy and procedures; and
- Provided personal wearable safety alarms.

While the comprehensive Workplace Violence Prevention Program has made strides in ensuring MedStar Health associates are safe, the violence continues and, in some instances, is increasing. Violence against health care workers should not be accepted or tolerated as “just part of the job.” Having an increased public awareness campaign on this issue would help combat this phenomenon and provide the support our health care providers need and deserve.

For the reasons listed above, we respectfully ask that you give HB 1389 a ***favorable*** report.