



Maryland State Council
Safe Practice Safe Care

To: Maryland House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

From: Maryland State Council of the Emergency Nurses Association

Date: March 8, 2022

Re: HB 1154 Criminal Law – Felony Second–Degree Assault – Emergency
Medical Care Workers
Oral and written testimony
Maryland Emergency Nurses Association requests a FAVORABLE vote

Good day Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Committee members,

My name is Lena Sutch. I am the Immediate Past-President of the Maryland
Emergency Nurses Association. I am testifying on behalf of ENA, in favor of HB
1154 Criminal Law – Felony Second–Degree Assault – Emergency Medical Care
Workers.

I have been an ED nurse for about eight years. In that time I have been punched,
slapped, bitten, kicked, spit-on, verbally assaulted and threatened more times
than I can count. I would like to tell you about the day that I decided to leave the
bedside. There was a “go-team” call to the parking lot, which is where we often
found people who had been assaulted, murdered and left for dead. Again, in the
parking lot next to our cars. On this night we found a large unconscious man who

had overdosed and was not breathing. We lifted him onto a stretcher, gave him life saving medication and brought him in to the hospital to be monitored. Once he started to wake up he immediately began to assault the staff- kicking a pregnant nurse, spitting in the face of a patient care technician and swinging fists to hit whomever came close. Finally, with an eight-person team, we were able to restrain him. This was when he looked into my eyes and threatened to “cut my face, find my family and kill my children”. We called the police and they came a few hours later. They told us we could press charges after work if we wanted to but that “nothing will stick”. We already have staffing shortages putting the lives of our patients at risk. Nurses are not lasting at the bedside. Without a change, there will be a collapse of the healthcare system in Maryland.

Amending current state statute 3-203 to include emergency workers is logical. We are emergency workers, just like the police, parole officers, fire, and EMS. We work as one team, and as such, we should all be in the same “protected group,” with special penalties for those who intentionally assault us. HB 1154 is one of the best ways to send a ZERO TOLERANCE message. Thank you.

Lena Sutch, MSN, RN
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