



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 Mandy Garrett-Baya. I am the current 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.

You’ve heard it on the local and national news. Violence towards healthcare workers, and especially emergency department workers, has increased during the Covid pandemic.

- Mental health problems have increased, and Maryland has a severe lack of inpatient behavioral health beds. These patients wait in our ERs for days and weeks.

- With police reform, more violent patients are being brought to the ED to be “medically cleared.” This is a dangerous situation, especially during arrival and transfer times.
- Maryland has a nursing shortage, resulting in closed hospital beds. Yet the patients keep coming to the ER, and the sickest of them wait in an ER bed until an inpatient bed opens up. Because of Federal EMTALA regulations, ERs cannot turn away patients.
- With the inpatients occupying the ER beds, the incoming ED patients wait in the waiting room. Maryland has the worst Emergency Room wait times in the nation. The average wait to see a doctor is over 4 hours. Even though we try to care for as many as we can in the waiting room, waiting makes people angry and edgy.
- Maryland’s opioid crisis has worsened during the pandemic. Addicted patients seek opioids from ERs. When we don’t give them their medication of choice, they often threaten and assault us.
- The same uncivil, demanding, and hurtful people that are on the outside of the ER are now inside the ER, threatening staff, and the other patients. Something has got to be done. Many days, the Hospital is not a safe haven for people to come to receive care.

Last time I was assaulted I called the police to report it and they replied “no one is going to do anything about this- it’s a waste of our time”.

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