



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 8, 2022

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Re: Letter of Support with Amendment - House Bill 1154 - Criminal Law - Felony Second-Degree Assault - Emergency Medical Care Workers

Dear Chair Clippinger:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1154.

Maryland is facing a staggering health care workforce crisis, with a 50% increase in nursing vacancies in hospitals statewide since August 2021. At the same time, our remaining staff, after more than two years on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, face a rise in workplace violence.

Rates of nonfatal workplace violence against health care workers have risen over the past 10 years—accounting for 73% of all nonfatal violent injuries and illnesses in 2018, the latest available data.^{1,2} Workplace violence takes a toll and leads to higher staff turnover, absenteeism, deterioration of employee morale, and burnout.³

HB 1154 seeks to impose a felony on an individual who intentionally causes physical injury to an emergency department health care worker in a hospital or freestanding medical facility. A 2019 MHA survey showed behavioral health, medical surgical, labor and delivery, and critical care units were also affected by violence. HB 1154 would protect only a small portion of the health care workforce.

We recommend HB 1154 be amended to apply to all health care workers providing care in a hospital or freestanding medical facility. We appreciate the sponsor and chairman's attention to this critical issue and look forward to working together to explore how changes in the law can better protect **all** our health care workers.

For more information, please contact:
Erin Dorrien, Vice President, Policy
Edorrien@mhaonline.org

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (April, 2020). "[Fact Sheet: Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018](#)".

² The Joint Commission. (June 18, 2021). "[R³ Report: Requirement, Rationale, Reference](#)".

³ Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems: Report for the American Hospital Association. (July 26, 2017). [Cost of Community Violence to Hospitals and Health Systems](#).