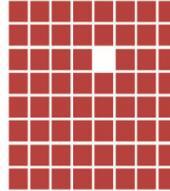




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Maryland Chapter
**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF
EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS**

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
Members, House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Barrie S. Ciliberti

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Christine K. Krone

DATE: March 8, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1154 – *Criminal Law – Felony Second Degree Assault – Emergency Medical Care Workers*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (MDACEP), we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 1154. House Bill 1154 would add an individual providing emergency and related services in an emergency department of a hospital to the class of persons protected by an enhanced penalty if they are assaulted. Currently, if a law enforcement officer, parole agent, or first responder is assaulted in the performance of their duties, the defendant can be found guilty of felony assault. House Bill 1154 adds those working in a hospital emergency department to the list of those persons that trigger the felony charge for the defendant.

First responders were added to the statute in 2015. But the threat from individuals who would assault a person providing emergency services does not stop at the hospital door. In fact, for hospital workers in the emergency room, it only begins at that point. It is unclear why the State would extend this law for public safety and others providing emergency services but not the hospital employee who is helping the same patient alongside the EMS worker at the hospital. No one deserves to be assaulted at their job.

According to a 2018 survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), almost half of emergency physicians report being physically assaulted at work, while about 70 percent of emergency nurses report being hit and kicked while on the job. Furthermore, the vast majority (80 percent) of emergency physicians say violence in the emergency department harms patient care. The frequency of violent attacks on nurses, physicians, and patients in our nation's emergency departments is unconscionable and unacceptable. For medical professionals, being assaulted in the emergency department must no longer be tolerated as "part of the job." Unfortunately, the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated the violence bestowed on those working in the emergency department. Not only were our physicians and nurses working tirelessly to care for individuals both with and without COVID but, too often, they encountered individuals upset over COVID policies, including the lack of visitation. Maryland is experiencing a critical health care worker shortage. After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, health care workers are leaving the field. The State must ensure that we have a robust health care workforce to care for our residents. We cannot have workplace violence be yet another reason these individuals leave the workforce.

For these reasons, MedChi and MDACEP urge a favorable report on House Bill 1154.

For more information call:

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