



Maryland
Hospital Association

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Maryland Hospital Priorities to Protect the Workforce, Improve Health Equity Become Law Oct. 1

Elkridge, Md. – Several of the Maryland Hospital Association’s (MHA) 2021 legislative priorities to improve health equity, advance communities, and strengthen the safety and well-being of hospital employees statewide will become law Oct. 1.

Of the 25,000 incidents of violence reported across all workplaces annually, 75% occur in health care or social service facilities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, health care and social service workers are five times as likely to be injured in the workplace. To help combat these issues **HB289 Peace Orders – Workplace Violence passed during the 2021 Maryland General Assembly legislative session**, allowing an employer to file a petition for a peace order on behalf of an employee if a specific act is committed against the employee at work.

“Maryland hospitals and health systems, which are among the largest employers in their communities, are committed to the safety and wellbeing of their workforce,” notes Bob Atlas, MHA president & CEO. “Allowing a hospital representative to petition for a peace order on behalf of an employee is another tool to help protect our health care heroes and preserve hospitals as safe places of hope and healing.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, incidences of workplace violence continued and even worsened. Over the past three years, MHA, the Maryland Nurses Association, and the Maryland Society for Human Resource Management Safety Council Inc. partnered to advocate for peace order legislation, which was sponsored by House Judiciary Vice Chair Vanessa Atterbary. A companion bill in the Senate was sponsored by Sen. Charles Sydnor.

“The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) is appreciative of the Maryland Hospital Association’s partnership and commitment in ensuring the passage of the Peace Order legislation,” says Dr. Charlotte Wood, president of the Maryland Nurses Association. “It is essential that we protect our nurses, since one in every four nurses experience violence in the workplace. MNA’s high level of engagement with legislators and other partners have resulted in a successful bill that embraces workplace violence protections. We look forward to working collaboratively with the MHA and our other partners to implement the Peace Order Bill to protect all employees, especially nurses across the state of Maryland.”

The Maryland Society for Human Resource Management State Council, Inc. represents more than 7,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) across the state and has championed this issue for many years.

“Human Resources professionals are often targeted in workplace violence incidents during terminations or disciplinary action,” says Greta Engle Kessler, vice president employee benefits, USI Insurance Services and SHRM member. “As professionals, we are deeply committed to creating safe places to work for all of our employees. It was our privilege to work with our community healthcare partners to ensure final passage of this important legislation, which provides employers with another tool to create safe working environments for all employees.”

MHA also supported bills to create greater health equity in our state.

“All Marylanders deserve an equal opportunity to achieve optimal health — regardless of social, economic, or demographic differences,” says Atlas. “Maryland hospitals and health systems are taking bold steps to achieve this goal and address long-standing health disparities.”

These bills become law Oct. 1:

- **SB5/HB28 Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities:** Requires all health care professionals to attest to completing an approved implicit bias training program the first time they renew their licenses after April 1, 2022. Also establishes a mandated appropriation for the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and expands the requirements on health data to be collected and stratified by race.
- **SB52/HB78 Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021):** Establishes the Maryland Commission on Health Equity, comprised of leaders of state agencies, to employ a health equity framework for policy changes throughout the state. The Commission must develop a comprehensive health equity plan to address social determinants of health and set statewide goals on health equity.
- **SB565/HB309 Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information:** Empowers Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) to ensure data on health disparities and health inequities is available and transparent. Representatives from Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) must meet with OMHHD at least yearly to examine the collection of health data that includes race and ethnicity and to identify ways to improve collection and accessibility. The bill updates requirements for the annual Health Care Disparities Report Card and requires each health occupation board to include an option for all licensees to report their race and ethnicity when renewing their licenses.

In addition to these bills, MHA's broader health equity agenda includes successfully advocating for the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act, which was enacted in May. That legislation establishes the Pathways to Health Equity program and Health Equity Resource Communities.

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About the Maryland Hospital Association

The Maryland Hospital Association serves Maryland's 60 nonprofit hospitals and health systems through collective action to shape policies, practices, financing, and performance to advance health care and the health of all Marylanders. For more information, visit www.mhaonline.org.