Sample Letter Five: Applicable to the state of MD

[Date]

Dear [Legislator’s name or Governor’s name]:

As [the governor/a member] of the Maryland chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing [number] internal medicine physicians, subspecialists and medical students in our state, I am writing on behalf of our chapter to urge you to pass legislation protecting physicians, health care workers and public health officials in Maryland from threats, harassment, and violence in the workplace.

There is legislation currently pending in our state, House bill 267/Senate bill 298, that would ban threats against public health officials and hospital workers who care for patients. The bill would make threats against those hospital workers and public health officials punishable by up to 90 days imprisonment and a $500 maximum fine. While I urge state lawmakers to pass this legislation, more needs to be done to address this growing crisis.

These harmful acts of threats and violence have been increasing since the beginning of the pandemic and are having a negative impact on our ability to care for patients. Physicians and other clinicians have worked tirelessly to respond to the pandemic and protect our communities’ health, and we should be able to do our jobs free from violence. Rising violence against physicians and other health care workers is a [global](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7531183/#B1) problem, which the [World Medical Association](https://www.wma.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WHA73-WMA-statement-on-Covid-19-pandemic-response-.pdf) labeled “an international emergency” that “undermines the very foundations of health systems and ultimately impacts critically on patients’ health.” A 2018 analysis [found](https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/workplace-violence-healthcare-2018.htm) that health care and social service workers were five times as likely to experience workplace violence than workers overall, and that health care workers specifically made up 73 percent of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illness due to violence. The pandemic has [exacerbated](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7470723/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1646498866732569&usg=AOvVaw3pXyez-ZhSLwSN6FyWGkzg/) this violence, adding to the challenges physicians and our health system are facing.

[insert any specific stories or data about violence against physicians/health care workers in your state]

I appreciate that Maryland is one of ten states that has adopted laws establishing workplace violence prevention standards for health care employers. However, our state is not among the [38 states](https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/advocacy/state/workplace-violence2/) that have established or increased criminal penalties for the assault of physicians and health care workers. Neither is our state among the [35 states](https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/50-State-Survey-Legal-Protections-for-Public-Health-Officials.pdf) that have prohibited impeding public health officials’ duties through threats, harassment, or violence. That needs to happen.

I urge you to support and pass policies outlined inHB0267/SB0298 but also to include similar reforms protecting all physicians and health care workers from such threats and acts of violence in the workplace. I am counting on you to take the necessary action to protect our community’s health and safety by protecting our health workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

[Insert name]

[Governor/Member]

Maryland Chapter of the American College of Physicians