



TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Neither For Nor Against

[LD 629](#) – *Resolve, To Establish the Task Force To Study Improving Safety and Provide Protection from Violence for Health Care Workers in Hospitals and Mental Health Care Providers*

March 24, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Jeffrey Austin and I am with the Maine Hospital Association and I am offering this testimony neither for nor against LD 629.

The Maine Hospital Association (MHA) represents all 36 community-governed hospitals including 33 non-profit general acute care hospitals, 2 private psychiatric hospitals, and 1 acute rehabilitation hospital.

We do not support the bill as it came out of the Revisor's Office, but we do support the amendment that we understand will be submitted by the sponsor.

The issue of violence in hospitals is a significant issue and not really the kind of problem that can be addressed in 2 or 3 off-session meetings.

As we discussed this issue with our members, there is a discreet issue for which they need guidance and we believe this discreet issue could be addressed in a few meetings with the right participants. The issue we want to explore is what options exist for hospitals when there has been an assault on hospital grounds, typically against an employee, but the employee/victim does not want to 'press charges.' As I understand it, the victim does not technically press charges, the local District Attorney makes a decision whether or not to prosecute. We need to better understand the thinking of police, DAs and judges in those circumstances where the victim is not participating/cooperating. What are our options, as the hospital, to press charges?

The policy a hospital will ultimately adopt will be made after consulting with staff. However, in order to have that conversation, we need to know what is possible. We're hoping to have some frank conversations with the law enforcement/judicial decisionmakers in these circumstances and we believe that your convening a group to discuss this issue is the best way forward.

Thank you.