

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HOUE BILL 1021:

Maryland Healthy Working Families-Seasonal Workers

TO: Chairman Derrick E. Davis, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Derrell Frazier, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 25, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. JOTF opposes House Bill 1021 as a means of ensuring that the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act continues to provide earned sick and safe leave to all low-wage working Marylanders across the state with no exemptions.

Over 700,000 Marylanders can now begin to accrue earned sick and safe leave under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, which began last year after a long six-year fight. This fight involved much negotiation and compromise to make sure that both businesses and workers are considered equitably when it comes to earned sick and safe leave. However, when it comes to earned sick leave, state-by-state we know that working families are the most vulnerable. No one should have to choose between their health and their job, yet an absence or delay of earned sick leave makes this choice ever-present for working families. Most importantly though, the absence or delay of earned sick leave means the increasing pressure and fear of losing income, which for a low-wage working family can ultimately mean the loss of stability on a variety of levels: family, economic, health, and more. Any alteration of earned sick and safe leave for Marylanders will only cause more harm and ultimately becomes counterproductive to the six years of progress Maryland has already made.

House Bill 1021 seeks to alter the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act as it currently stands by exempting individuals from accruing sick and safe leave who work 120 days or less. By exempting seasonal workers from accruing earned sick and safe leave, we are sending the message that these kinds of workers (who many times are working multiple jobs) cannot take care of themselves or their family equally. Also, by excluding them from the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, we are eliminating their access to safe leave. JOTF understands very deeply that this not a one-sided issue, and that businesses have a stake in earned sick and safe leave as well. This is why government agencies like the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) have already assisted small businesses with the implementation of the law. There are also affordable payroll systems ready to help businesses track accrual of their employees earned sick and safe leave time.

JOTF is committed to opposing any legislation that seeks to undermine the hard work of countless legislators and advocates across the state to ensure that the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act continues as current law. We believe that what is proposed in House Bill 1021 only serves to disrupt low-wage worker's access to better job security and caters to a false sense of insecurity that resources do not exist for businesses to become complaint or begin tracking leave. For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report of House Bill 1021.

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