

HB 1410

February 18, 2020

TO: Members of the House Economics Matters Committee

FROM: Kobi Little, President, Baltimore City Branch of the NAACP

RE: House Bill 1410 – Labor and Employment - Secure Maryland Wage Act

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais, and Members of the Committee. On behalf of the Baltimore City Branch of the NAACP, I am pleased to issue my support for HB 1410.

This bill recognizes what is intuitive - fair wages and benefits make jobs more attractive and help to retain workers. When the workers in question are employed at heightened security interest locations such as airports, ports and major train stations, this is clearly an important goal for the state to pursue. Reduced turnover at these critical sites means a more experienced, knowledgeable and well trained workforce, and ultimately, better safety and security for Maryland residents and the travelling public.

Many workers employed at BWI, Pennsylvania Station and the Port of Baltimore are paid wages that belie the importance of their jobs and deny them the ability to support their families with any degree comfort. We know that all across America it is black and Hispanic workers that disproportionately fill these kinds of low wage jobs.¹ Black workers are more than one and half times more likely than their white counterparts to be paid a wage so low that their family would be in poverty if they were the sole earner, while Hispanic workers are more than twice as likely as white workers.²

We made a start last year on giving low wage workers in Maryland a better future when we set a path to a \$15 minimum wage by 2025. But for jobs that are so crucial to our public safety we must do more and we must do it now.

I urge you to support this bill and bring economic justice closer to being a reality for this hard working and diverse workforce.

¹ See https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911_Brookings-Metro_low-wage-workforce_Ross-Bateman.pdf (page 9)

² 8.6% of white workers earn an income which would put their family beneath the poverty threshold if they were the sole earner, compared to 14.3% of black workers and 19.2% of Hispanic workers. See <https://www.epi.org/blog/workers-of-color-are-far-more-likely-to-be-paid-poverty-level-wages-than-white-workers/>