

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Finance Committee
From: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Executive Director
Re: SB 404, Maryland Healthy Working Families Act - Applicability
Date: February 20, 2020
Position: Oppose

Advocates for Children and Youth strongly opposes SB 404, which would create a potentially significant loophole in the state's Sick and Safe Leave Act.

We know that paid sick days protect children and families. For a typical family without paid sick days, just 3.5 sick days without pay is equivalent to losing an entire month's grocery budget. With most families working one and two jobs, all of us have faced the challenge of a sick child needing to stay home. And I imagine many, feeling guilty, have dropped a sick child off at school when the child and those at school would be better off with that child at home. For parents without paid sick days, their children are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick leave to be sent to school or daycare sick.

ACY opposes any changes to the state's Sick and Safe Leave Act. The legislation already includes compromise decisions that limit the impact of this critical safety net. SB 404 would shift too much unilateral authority to the employer when seeking verification of an employee's absence. As currently written, the Act allows an employer to require an employee to verify his or her leave. However, the employee retains important control over the terms regarding providing written verification of that leave.

This provision is important because employees may have personal reasons for needing leave, whether a health or safety concern, and they should retain the ability to mutually agree with an employer over what written notification should include. Giving an employer the unilateral right to set the written notification could force employees into a position where they do not feel comfortable taking their legally protected leave because they must disclose personal information to do so.

Providing paid earned sick and safe leave is an important step toward family economic stability. It results in healthier and stronger children, families and communities. We urge this committee to vote unfavorable on SB 404.