



**Testimony on HB1326**  
***Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health***  
***Emergency Leave***  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Due to the need for increased and adequate sick and safe leave during emergencies as seen by COVID-19, we are in adamant support of HB1326- Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave.

The pandemic has revealed the need that workers have for paid leave and while the Maryland Essential Workers Protections Act provides quarantine leave, this bill extends sick leave- both two efforts to extend leave to Marylanders. Throughout this pandemic, Maryland workers of various industries have needed to take sick leave due to the health ailments of COVID-19, but some have been excluded from doing so such as temporary workers, and on-call health professionals. Due to this, workers who could have been diagnosed or treated for COVID-19 were not able to and therefore consequently, helped contribute to the number of COVID-19 contractions and overall death toll.

For our members, this legislation has a significant impact on an everyday basis. To relieve the number of hospitalizations of Marylanders due to COVID-19, this bill gives workers the leave necessary to safely quarantine to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations. If these reasons weren't enough, lack of leave also forces workers to become pressured to work through illness and denies adequate time to recover, businesses suffer in productivity losses<sup>1</sup> and workers suffer from elongated health consequences, fear of retaliation, and potential job loss.<sup>2</sup>

By expanding Maryland's sick leave law to cover more workers and provide for paid public health emergency leave, this bill establishes a landscape for Maryland's stronger and healthier

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<sup>1</sup> Zoe Ziliak Michel, The Business Benefits of Paid Sick Days in Maryland (Jan. 13, 2017). Available at: <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/04/The-Business-Benefits-of-Paid-Sick-Days-in-Maryland-final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Dana Wilkie, 9 in 10 Workers Admit Going to Work Sick (Nov. 7, 2019). Available at: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/coming-to-work-sick.aspx>.

economic future. For these reasons, we believe that this legislation will create the necessary health and safety precautions to protect more Maryland workers in instances of emergencies and ask this Committee to vote favorably to support HB1326.

Respectfully,

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