



Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Loyola University Maryland
Maryland Catholic Conference
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
Partnership
Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore
Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

Stacey Jefferson, Co-Chair
P: 410-637-1900 ext 8578
C: 443-813-9231

E: stacey.jefferson@bhsbaltimore.org

Julia Gross, Co-Chair
P: 410-528-0021x6029

E: jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 594

Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Verification

Senate Finance Committee

February 25, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly opposes SB 594, which authorizes an employer to require verification that earned sick and safe leave is used appropriately when the leave is used during the period between the first 107 and 120 calendar days that an employee was employed by the employer

As of February 11, 2018, more than 700,000 Maryland workers now have access to earned sick leave - and we should not go backwards. Nearly four in ten private-sector workers – and 80% of low-wage workers – were previously unable to earn a single sick day to recover from common, short-term illnesses. Families that are already living in or near poverty can least afford to lose income due to illness, yet half of Maryland workers earning less than \$35,000 couldn't earn sick days in Maryland prior to February 2018. For our most vulnerable neighbors, just a few days of lost pay is often equivalent to an entire month's grocery budget or rent payment, thus rolling back the Healthy Working Families Act could be financially catastrophic for low-income Marylanders.

Even seemingly “minor” changes to the Healthy Working Families Act – like SB 594 - could negatively impact our state's workers, families, and the health of our communities. In particular, SB 594 would roll back negotiations that were agreed to regarding when earned sick leave can be utilized without additional hurdles for Maryland workers. The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act was introduced at 90 days before employees could utilize their leave, opposition wanted 120 days, and 107 days was agreed to by both sides as a compromise. Requiring additional procedural hurdles for days 107-120 goes against the spirit of the compromise. The current law reflects a reasonable balance between requiring verification and acknowledging that not every sick day can be confirmed by a doctor's note.

Access to earned sick leave provides economic security for working Marylanders, and ultimately creates the stability necessary for low-income families to move out of poverty. Changing and reducing access to earned sick leave is short-sighted and potentially detrimental. Maryland workers have waited years for access to earned sick leave, and should not bear the burdens of harmful new exemptions and changes.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges an unfavorable report on SB 594.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.