



**Testimony in SUPPORT SB860 with Amendments
Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – COVID-19**

On behalf of the 2,150 teachers and administrators who work in Charles County, Maryland the Education Association of Charles County urges support of SB860, Occupational Disease Presumptions-Covid-19. As a local president and a full-time field staff who hear the stories everyday of members who have suffered from Covid-19 and experienced financial, physical, and medical impacts of this virus.

Educators are on the frontlines providing essential educational services to the children and families in our community. Young educators, educators with young children, senior educators, and those with serious pre-existing health conditions are all at greater risk for experiencing serious illness if they contract Covid-19. Schools are the hubs of our communities and as we transition to bringing more children back for face-to-face instruction as CDC recommendations advise, we will also encounter children who are not able to wear masks due to age, disability, or their own serious medical conditions. Our profession is one that is dominated by females who often are balancing the needs of their family and have limited access to sick leave due to childbirth and caring for young children who become ill.

The retroactive nature of this bill is critical. Recently a member shared a story with us who is in her tenth year of teaching and exhausted her sick leave last year as she welcomed a new baby to her family. Her period of illness from a COVID 19 diagnosis earlier this year drained her of the leave that she was allocated in the new school year. Now she is faced with the possibility of having days of unpaid leave if her children need to quarantine due to exposure or if they become sick the remainder of this school year. Having multiple days of unpaid leave could put her employment in jeopardy, since she no longer has any other paid leave options to exercise.

Frontline educators are counting on their elected leaders to provide much needed relief so that they can effectively continue to support both their students and the communities they serve, all the while not putting their own livelihood at risk because of contracting the Coronavirus. As representatives of the educators in Charles County we implore you to give a favorable report on SB860.

Linda McLaughlin and Dawn Pipkin

Education Association of Charles County President and EACC/MSEA UniServ Director