



Testimony on SB594
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Verification
Position: UNFAVORABLE

Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Finance 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. Given the vast amount of health and safe-related reasons workers need to utilize to keep themselves healthy, we find SB-594 unnecessarily burdensome to any employee.

For many workers in Maryland, taking any kind of leave from work is a last resort as many workers prefer to work and only take leave when necessary- these occasions range from severe medical treatments such as surgeries, or health crises that they cannot avoid such as a hospitalization by ambulance. On many occasions and rather than risking the high costs of hospital bills, many low-wage workers often cannot afford to go to the hospital and alternatively stay home to try to mend their medical ailments. For workers, this is the best alternative despite suffering from either severe or non-severe medical problems.

For 1199SEIU members, majority of whom are essential workers and earn low wages, this legislation would be devastating. Our members and workers in general, cannot predict when they get sick and in times of health strain, verification of being sick should not be a requirement to have leave become fully accepted by any employer. Moreover, workers should also have the capability of taking health leave for personal reasons and not have to make this information privy to their employers. In practice, forcing workers to provide validation and verification of why they are sick could also implicate heavy conflicts of interest with HIPPA regulations.

Like health leave, safe leave can also be a matter that is very personal for an employee. Workers that take safe leave often utilize it due to reasons such as domestic violence, prostitution, being stalked, or even human trafficking. If this bill is passed, this would further unravel any privacy that a worker may want to maintain when it comes these personal issues/ circumstances.

Combined, both sick and safe leave are circumstances where workers should never be denied nor must explain why they are requesting leave, nor provide validation of how they spent their leave. For these reasons, we ask this Committee to give an unfavorable report on SB594.

Respectfully,

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