



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Balto. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

HB 197 - Unemployment Insurance - Work Search Requirement - Exemption for Federal Civilian Employees During a Federal Government Shutdown February 14, 2024

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 197. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

HB 197 removes the requirement that federal civilian employees who are furloughed by the Federal Government during a shutdown actively seek new employment. The unemployment insurance system in Maryland currently requires that recipients apply to new jobs in order to maintain eligibility for benefits. This work search requirement is justified as a way to get workers re-employed. Since federally furloughed workers are not receiving pay from their employer through no fault of their own and the state's goal is not to encourage these workers to leave federal employment, the work search requirement has no benefit or justification to the state's interests.

In order to meet the definition of actively looking for work, the Maryland Department of Labor requires that recipients complete "at least three valid reemployment activities each week, which must include at least one job contact."¹ This also requires applicants to keep records of their contacts with employers. These records are subject to audit and potential denial of benefits.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 197.

¹ Maryland Department of Unemployment Insurance Communications. "Maryland's Work Search Requirements."