



**Testimony of Ricarra Jones, Political Director of 1199SEIU
HB 1571 – Hospitals – Changes in Status – Hospital Employee Retraining and Placement
Position: FAVORABLE**

Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

1199SEIU Healthcare Workers East (1199SEIU) is the largest healthcare union in the country with, with over 450,000 members throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida and Washington, D.C. **We fully support any and all measures such as this important piece of legislation designed to protect Maryland working families.**

Every day, the members of 1199SEIU save lives, deliver babies and care for the sick, seniors and people with disabilities. We are nurses, nurse aides, techs, lab workers, clerks, housekeepers, dietary workers, transporters, pharmacists, social workers and many other types of medical professionals. We respectfully urge your support of this legislation because an update to existing Maryland law is urgently needed to better protect healthcare workers. Our analysis of the trends in acute care beds across the State due to the rapidly changing nature of healthcare, could leave hundreds of Marylanders without jobs in both rural and urban regions.

Our research team conducted an analysis of acute care hospital bed trends in Maryland over the past decade, using reports published by the Maryland Health Care Commission. Thus far, seven Maryland hospitals have already lost more than 40 percent of their certified beds. There are a number of forces at play in this trend: The consolidation of hospitals into larger health systems which seek to avoid duplicative services, as well as a greater focus on community health and outpatient settings. This transform of our healthcare delivery system has required financial investment in both the technical and physical infrastructure of hospitals and health systems. We appreciate the Legislature's willingness to allocate capital and operating budget funds for these needs. Now, it is time for you to approve a human capital investment as well through this bill, to fund hospital employee retraining.

The transformation of healthcare is occurring statewide, at a rapid pace, and based upon the data provided by the MHCC, no region is immune. Eastern Shore hospitals which have seen entire service lines eliminated, such as Shore Regional Medical Center in Chestertown, which eliminated both Pediatrics and Obstetrics. Laurel Regional Hospital in Prince George's County has eliminated maternal health.

Our State is in a position now to take the potential displacement that will result from the changes in healthcare as an opportunity to invest in retraining dedicated healthcare workers to be certified or credentialed for the healthcare jobs of the future. In other words, instead of a housekeeper who

makes \$9/hour having to now travel more than 30 miles to another facility which may be further from their home and community, they could use money from the fund to become a Community Health Worker based in their own community.

Additionally, we know many nursing homes operate with dangerously low staffing levels that result in lower hours of bedside care for patients. By passing this legislation, the State could utilize this targeted Hospital Employee Retraining fund to create a pipeline of displaced service workers in hospitals into the Geriatric Nursing Assistant jobs that are desperately needed in nursing homes.

We recognize that there are hospitals in Maryland who are looking to upskill workers to fill positions on the new front-lines of caregiving. **But what has been missing, is a state-wide fund to train displaced workers** ensure that we have a workforce ready to fill those needs. Federal funds that may currently exist to provide job placement services to displaced workers often can't be accessed until the layoff occurs or need to be spent in less time than healthcare training demands. This legislation ensures adequate funding that can be accessed before a hospital worker becomes unemployed to ensure they can provide for their family while transitioning to a healthcare job allied with our waiver that helps keep Marylanders healthy in the lowest cost setting.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report for House Bill 1571. .