



Senate Finance Committee

SB0107 – Labor and Employment - Secure Maryland Wage Act

Testimony of Jamie Contreras, Vice President and Director, Capital Area District, 32BJ SEIU

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Good afternoon Committee Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman and Committee Members. My name is Jamie Contreras, Vice President of SEIU 32BJ. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on behalf of the union's 20,000 members in Maryland and the D.C. Metro area.

This bill will help to make the state safer by ensuring that experienced employees are employed at heightened security interest locations, all while making a transformational difference in the lives of hard working men and women.

At the same time, it will protect the traveling public and essential workers by providing for health benefits for essential frontline workers. The majority of service workers at these facilities are Black and Brown and have worked through the COVID pandemic despite being at higher risk for the disease and often not having access to affordable healthcare.

Getting a job at an airport is not a simple task; there are numerous security regulations and employees are consistently monitored by government agencies.

Work at the Port of Baltimore is similarly intense. Given it is a major shipping terminal, the threat of illegal activity must be constantly defended against. This means extensive training for workers who are the eyes and ears of the Port.

Research has shown that higher wages correlate to reduced employee turnover. In security and safety roles this is shown to have a measurable impact on security outcomes. Jurisdictions across the country have recognized this correlation. Similar policies to that proposed here are in place at LAX, Oakland Airport, the Port of Oakland, and the three New York City airports, as well as Dulles and Reagan National.

SB0107 would set minimum wage and benefit rates based on the prevailing area standards for security guards. This will not mean luxury for workers. These rates are by definition the industry standard. For many workers however, it may mean access to meaningful health insurance outside of public programs for the first time.

Restoring public confidence is crucial to getting transportation hubs – key drivers of our state's economy- back to full capacity. Easing access to health insurance will go a long way to meeting that goal.

On behalf of the thousands of workers and local communities who stand to gain, I urge you to support this bill, and help make Maryland healthier and safer while improving the lives of thousands of workers.