



SB0486 -- Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act
Official Testimony
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Kelley & Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Chanai Williams. I am a single mother of two kids and we live in Baltimore. I have worked for seven years at a major hospital in the city, where I am a Unit Associate, meaning I support doctors, nurses and other team members to provide high-quality care for our patients.

Working during the Covid pandemic has added pressure to all of our lives.

As an essential worker, I have had to continue working even though my kids are doing “virtual” school from home. My work schedule has changed, making it complicated to juggle work and home life. But I am committed to the mission of the hospital and I come to work every day focused on helping people get healthier.

While I have worked around Covid patients I am fortunate to have avoided the virus. Many of my fellow workers were not as fortunate. About 10 employees on our floor have been infected with Covid and forced to quarantine for at least two weeks.

It’s been frustrating trying to get the personal protective equipment we need to stay safe. At one point last year, the hospital discouraged us from using new gowns, masks and gloves, even though that is the safest way to work with patients who may have the virus. We’ve also had to live with an inflexible system that penalizes support staff for being even a few minutes late – during a time when all of us are trying to manage the new reality brought on by the pandemic. And I have not received any hazard pay these past ten months.

My message to you is that essential and frontline workers have been going through a lot, putting up with risks and stress to take care of patients. I urge you to show these workers the respect they deserve and pass the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Chanai Williams
Member, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East