



Testimony of Rhonda Davis in Support of SB0486, the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act

To Chair Kelley & Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Rhonda Davis. I've worked for 13 years as a Dietary Cook at a Long-Term Care facility in Baltimore. I cook evening meals for our patients and make sure to meet their special dietary needs. I support the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act because I care about my patients and all the members of my union.

My employer has done mostly a good job responding to the COVID19 pandemic. They acted quickly to make sure we had good PPE and gave us hazard pay. At first, we didn't have to use our sick or vacation days if we contracted COVID19 and they ensured we had safe rides to and from work. I and most of my coworkers have already been fully vaccinated or received at least one dose of the vaccine. **We were able to avoid a big COVID19 outbreak in our facility because we had a good emergency action plan in place, are tested regularly, and were issued quality PPE.**

Unfortunately, my story is **NOT** the norm. When I talk to my union brothers and sisters who work in other facilities, I am shocked by the horror stories they are still experiencing. Many of them did not receive PPE at all, and when they did, it had to be reused to the point that it was no longer protective. They do not get hazard pay, and they were rarely tested if at all. And they have to use vacation days or take unpaid time off if they get COVID. Unfortunately, my job has now switched policies and we have to use vacation days or unpaid time off if we get COVID too, and I don't think that is fair.

The Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act will require facilities to have a pandemic Emergency Action Plan in place. My experience has shown how much safer it is to work in a place that had a good plan compared to the facilities that doesn't. It's time to protect people who are working on the frontlines during COVID-19. Essential workers deserve PPE, hazard pay, and a concrete pandemic response action plan no matter where they work. Please pass this bill. Thank you.

Rhonda Davis

Member, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East