

Dear Senators Kelley, Feldman and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am a resident of MD District 21 and have lived in Maryland most of my 70 years. I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am testifying in support of **Senate Bill 0486**.

The Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act guarantees safe working conditions, hazard pay, and access to testing and paid sick leave. Your support of this bill shows essential workers that we value their service.

Immigrant families, especially underdocumented families, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Despite working on the front lines in healthcare and other crucial service industries, they continue to be excluded from state unemployment, state healthcare, and the federal CARES Act.

The Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act is critical to supporting the individuals who have kept our cities functioning during this crisis. According to the Baltimore Sun, “Jennifer Chase, a Metrobus operator, said she had just learned that she’d been exposed to someone at work who tested positive for the coronavirus. She needed to arrange for testing and then find and pay for a hotel room to stay in, out of concern she might expose an older relative at home. ‘We put our life on the line day-in and day-out with exposure to this deadly virus,’ she said.” Baltimore Sun, Dec. 8, 2020, *Unions, advocates push for more protections in Maryland for essential workers*. Further, a May 2020 complaint filed with the Maryland Occupational Health & Safety against a Maryland company by the Public Justice Center “described . . . management’s insufficient efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 through mask use, hand hygiene, social distancing, and cleaning of the facility.”

Frontline workers like Ms. Chase and those who filed the May 2020 complaint sounding the alarm at their place of work need critical workplace protections to ensure their health and safety. With 6,322 deaths related to COVID-19 in Maryland, it is a matter of life and death.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **Support of Senate Bill 0486**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Linda K. Girdner, Ph.D.  
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