



**Testimony on HB0407**  
***Health Care Heroes Act of 2022***  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Ms. Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. Our union supports HB0407: Health Care Heroes Act of 2022 and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

In a time where the healthcare workforce is damaged by the spread of COVID, it is imperative that the State passes this bill to assist over-worked healthcare workers in times of crisis. There is an ever-increasing shortage of healthcare workers, the Maryland Hospital Association recently reported that there are 3,900 open positions for nurses in the state. There are countless other openings for various employment opportunities relating to healthcare, particularly nurses in various fields.

The lack of a stable healthcare workforce causes burnout in existing employees by requiring them to cover shifts and work increasingly long hours. In a review of studies done to assess the risk of burnout associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, 34% of nurses reported high emotional exhaustion, while 15% reported low personal accomplishment. The lack of healthcare workers also jeopardizes the quality of patient care. Several hospitals throughout the country have turned away patients because they simply do not have the capacity to provide proper care.

As representatives of healthcare workers, 1199SEIU finds it necessary that the State passes this bill to assist these workers, who are already stretched thin, by authorizing the Secretary of Health to declare a health care staffing shortage emergency and establishing processes for the issuance of initial licenses, temporary licenses, and temporary practice letters on an expedited basis during a health care staffing shortage emergency. By doing so, the State will reduce workforce burnout and provide better quality care for more patients.

Given the current COVID pandemic and climate of high workforce turnover in the state of Maryland today, we at 1199SEIU ask this Committee to give a favorable report to HB0407.

Respectfully,

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Maryland/DC Political Director  
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