



Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB1015

Labor and Employment – Healthy Working Families Act – Seasonal Temporary Workers

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Our union is strongly opposed to HB 1015 and urges an unfavorable report as it puts the health of workers at risk by weakening Maryland’s earned sick and leave law.

Sick leave laws typically have a probationary period of 90 days after hire during which workers cannot take leave; lengthening Maryland’s from 106 to 120 would further weaken the Healthy Working Families Act. Most states’ sick leave laws either allow workers to use leave as soon as they earn it (NY, NM, and CO) or set a 90-day period following the hiring of a worker during which sick leave cannot be taken (MA, OR, AZ, WA, CT, CA, Washington, D.C., and Montgomery County, Maryland). Maryland’s law provides that workers cannot take sick and safe leave within 106 days of hire – a number that is significantly worse for workers. Workers without earned sick and safe leave are 1.5 times more likely to go to work with a contagious reported working while sick¹.

The pandemic has proven the importance of all workers being able to take sick leave when they need it. Making it harder for Maryland workers to take sick leave would be a remarkable message to send to our state – and especially to our essential workers – as we emerge from a deadly pandemic that took the lives of so many workers. Our 1199 members who worked through the COVID-19 pandemic among some of our most vulnerable in hospitals, long term care facilities, and federally qualified health centers, know how important it is to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Access to earned sick and safe leave is critical keeping communities safe and healthy.

Given the public health emergency of the last three years, there is a common-sense argument for following the lead of states like New Mexico, New York, and California and eliminating the probationary period altogether – or, barring that, reducing the probationary period from 106 to 30 or 60 days.

Guaranteeing sick and safe leave can reduce costs for both workers and businesses. Workers without paid sick days are more likely to incur high family medical expenses and are twice as likely as those with sick leave to seek emergency room care because they cannot take time away from work during normal business hours to seek routine medical and preventative care. For businesses, paid sick leave reduces the productivity loss from employees working while sick. Sick leave saves Maryland employers up to \$13 billion per year through improved productivity².

For those reasons, 1199 SEIU urges an unfavorable report on HB 1015.

Sincerely,

Ricarra Jones, Political Director

Ricarra.jones@1199.org

¹ “Policy Brief: Earned Sick Leave.” City Health: <https://www.cityhealth.org/our-policy-package/earned-sick-leave/>

² Andrew Green, Kai Fillion & Elise Gould, “The need for paid sick days,” Economic Policy Institute, June 29, 2011, https://www.epi.org/publication/the_need_for_paid_sick_days “Paid Sick Days are Good for Business,” National Partnership for Women & Families, October 2020.