



*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HOUSE BILL 1015:**

**Labor and Employment - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act - Seasonal Temporary Workers**

TO: Chair C. T. Wilson, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Ioana Stoica, Policy Advocate

DATE: March 3, 2023

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF strongly opposes House Bill 1015 as a means of ensuring that the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act continues to provide earned sick and safe leave to all low-wage working Marylanders across the state with no exemptions.**

The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act was passed in 2017 after a long six-year fight. This fight involved much negotiation and compromise to make sure that both businesses and workers are considered equitably when it comes to earned sick and safe leave. Already these compromises were included in the original language of the bill: although we advocated for an employee to be able to use sick leave after 90 days of employment, we accepted a compromise of 106 days; 120 days is an unacceptable extension of this time period which would harm Maryland workers and low-income families the most. The 37 week period after which a rehired employee may have their leave reinstated was also a compromise in the original bill, and cutting this down to 32 weeks would significantly impact seasonal workers.

No one should have to choose between their health and their job, yet an absence or delay of earned sick leave makes this choice ever-present for working families. Most importantly though, the absence or delay of earned sick leave means the increasing pressure and fear of losing income, which for a low-wage working family can ultimately mean the loss of stability on a variety of levels: family, economic, health, and more. Any alteration of earned sick and safe leave for Marylanders will only cause more harm and ultimately becomes counterproductive to the six years of progress Maryland has already made.

House Bill 1015 seeks to alter the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act as it currently stands by exempting individuals from accruing sick and safe leave who work 120 days or less. By exempting seasonal workers from accruing earned sick and safe leave, we are sending the message that these kinds of workers (who many times are working multiple jobs) cannot take care of themselves or their family equally. Also, by excluding them from the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, we are eliminating their access to safe leave. JOTF understands very deeply that this is not a one-sided issue, and that

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businesses have a stake in earned sick and safe leave as well. This is why government agencies like the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) have already assisted small businesses with the implementation of the law. There are also affordable payroll systems ready to help businesses track accrual of their employees earned sick and safe leave time.

Additionally, [nationwide empirical studies have not found that sick leave mandates lead to significant losses](#); in fact, providing sick leave can even offset firms' higher labor costs, as worker access to sick leave reduces presenteeism—showing up to work while sick. When paid sick leave is offered as a benefit, the [rate of turnover is reduced and the number of accidents decrease](#). Research from states with similar laws, like New York, also shows that workers [do not abuse sick leave policies](#). Paid leave policies have also been found to benefit the local economy - saving up to \$1.1 billion per year on emergency room visits and on public health insurance spending. Additionally, when workers are able to have access to the income provided by paid sick leave programs, they are [more likely to reinvest locally through increased spending](#).

JOTF is committed to opposing any legislation that seeks to undermine the hard work of countless legislators and advocates across the state to ensure that the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act continues as current law. We believe that what is proposed in House Bill 1015 only serves to disrupt low-wage worker's access to better job security and caters to a false sense of insecurity that resources do not exist for businesses to become compliant or begin tracking leave. For these reasons, we respectfully **urge an unfavorable report of House Bill 1015.**

**For more information, contact:**

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