



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 456 - Healthy Working Families Act - Railroad Employees - Unpaid Leave  
Senate Finance Committee  
March 2, 2023**

**SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards  
President**

**Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 456. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Maryland has already set a floor for all workers to receive a minimum of 40 hours of sick leave per year. Unfortunately the 1936 Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) prevented railroad workers from enjoying the benefits of state paid leave programs, meaning that railroad workers were left behind. Under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act employers with 15 or more employees are required to provide 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours that an employee works. Smaller businesses are required to provide 1 hour of unpaid sick leave for every 30 hours that an employee works. Since railroad employers are large businesses and the RUIA prevents paid leave, the only solution is to grant unpaid sick leave for railroad workers by specifically naming them in the statute.

If railroad employers do not want to be covered by the law they can incorporate leave benefits directly into their collective bargaining agreement and exempt themselves from the standards required by the Healthy Working Families Act.

Paid time off and sick leave for railroad workers have become national issues. A few months ago, we almost saw the first nationwide rail strike in decades over the freight railroad companies' intransigence in denying sick leave. Lack of reliable sick leave can tear families apart as parents neglect their own healthcare and can not be there to take care of their children when needed.

For fairness and basic human decency, we urge a favorable report on SB 456.