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SB 456: Healthy Working Families Act – Railroad Employees – Unpaid Leave

Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee, March 2, 2023

Position: Favorable

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project works to expand and enforce the right of low-wage workers to receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. The PJC **supports SB 456**, which would require a railroad employer to provide a railroad employee with unpaid earned sick and safe leave under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act.

Railroad employees, like all employees, need sick leave when they get sick. Due to recent tragedies, the public is increasingly aware of the critically important need for railroad safety. Railroad employees – like all human beings – sometimes get sick. Ensuring that they can take sick days without fear of reprisal or retaliation helps ensure they can take the time they need to recover without working sick. Thus, SB 456 will help maintain the safety of our communities.

SB 456 provides only for unpaid leave, not paid leave. All workers deserve paid leave when they get sick. But if paid leave is not possible in a particular context, the right to take unpaid leave is still very important. SB 456's requirement for unpaid leave is a modest but important step that would help workers and protect Maryland communities without burdening railroad employers.

For these reasons, the PJC **SUPPORTS SB 456** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report. Should you have any questions, please call David Rodwin at 410-625-9409 ext. 249.