

Good morning / afternoon,

Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Shale Green. I live in Baltimore City. I am a security officer with Allied Universal at the Port of Baltimore and a member of 32BJ SEIU. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 780.

I have been working as a security officer at the Port of Baltimore for the last six years and my salary has only increased by 50% in comparison to the rest of the commercial security industry! Madam Chair and members of the committee, I pay my mortgage, utilities, and food at home. I take care of my two siblings. My mother has a rare form of cancer, and I take her back and forth to chemotherapy and pay for her medication. I pay for my life, car and health insurance. And after all these expenses, I had only \$20 left in my bank account last week, which I had to use for gas!

It has been such a struggle just to survive because my salary has seen little increase for the last six years! In addition to my 40 hours of work every week with Allied, I am forced to supplement my income by working an additional 20-30 hours a week with Amazon. At Allied, we have not been able to bargain for employer-paid health insurance, so many of us rely on state-subsidized health care. Because even working overtime as a security officer will not make a significant difference on our paychecks, many of my coworkers have to work second jobs at Amazon, DoorDash, and elsewhere to supplement their income or pay their health insurance. With the ongoing inflation, after taxes come out, the small wage increases barely make a difference!

Even after working 15 years at this job, we only get one week of vacation for the entire year, despite the fact that vacation is a necessary benefit for worker retention and to spend time with our families, rest and come to work prepared to do a good job. Instead, many of us are overworked, underpaid, and sleep-deprived, working daily to protect the Port of Baltimore and going to our second job afterwards to support our families.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, the Port of Baltimore is a sensitive and secure site that requires high-quality officers. We are the first line of defense for it. If anything happens at the Port, we are the first to act before the police are notified. It makes no sense that we work for a multibillion-dollar company to protect a state-owned site, yet live paycheck to paycheck and struggle to make ends meet. We deserve good wages and benefits for the very important work and public service we do. The General Assembly should protect workers like me by voting in favor of House Bill 780.

Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to speak.