

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Economic Matters Committee
From: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Executive Director
Re: HB 1021, Maryland Healthy Working Families Act –
Seasonal Temporary Workers
Date: February 25, 2020
Position: Oppose

Advocates for Children and Youth strongly opposes HB 1021, which exempts seasonal and temporary workers from sick and safe leave coverage and makes it more difficult for new employees to use their leave.

We know that paid sick days protect children and families. For a typical family without paid sick days, just 3.5 sick days without pay is equivalent to losing an entire month's grocery budget. With most families working one and two jobs, all of us have faced the challenge of a sick child needing to stay home. And I imagine many, feeling guilty, have dropped a sick child off at school when the child and those at school would be better off with that child at home. For parents without paid sick days, their children are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick leave to be sent to school or daycare sick.

ACY opposes any changes to the state's Sick and Safe Leave Act. The legislation already includes compromise decisions that limit the impact of this critical safety net. HB 1021 would eliminate the ability for seasonal and temporary workers to earn sick and safe leave, and Maryland should not adopt policies that would force any employees – whether permanent or temporary - to show up for work sick.

This change creates a perverse incentive to businesses to hire employees on a seasonal or temporary basis to avoid having to provide paid leave, creating a negative economic impact that could undermine economic stability for families across Maryland. In addition, "presenteeism" or workers underperforming because of illness, is estimated to cost employers \$160 billion per year – twice as much as the cost of absenteeism. Requiring seasonal employees to work while sick means that the quality of the work they produce that day will suffer.

Finally, the Healthy Working Families Act already exempts any employee who "regularly works less than 12 hours a week for an employer," so seasonal and temporary employees who work limited hours or work occasionally are already exempt. The current law reflects a reasonable balance between enabling full-time seasonal employees with more regular contact with the community to earn leave, while exempting those who don't regularly work.

Providing paid earned sick and safe leave is an important step toward family economic stability. It results in healthier and stronger children, families and communities. We urge this committee to vote unfavorable on HB 1021.

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Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.