



February 9, 2021

House Bill 685

Labor and Employment – Secure Maryland Wage Act

Committee: Economic Matters

Position: FAVORABLE

House Bill 685 will take an important step to improve the safety and security of critical transportation hubs by ensuring the attraction and retention of experienced and trained workers. This Bill requires an employer to pay specified wages and benefits to a covered employee. A covered employee is a nonexempt employee under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) who performs work at Baltimore/Washington International (BWI) Thurgood Marshall Airport, Baltimore Pennsylvania Station in Baltimore (Penn Station), or the Port of Baltimore.

Recent reports show that wealth is growing at the top of our income scale while people doing many of the toughest jobs in our county cannot afford rent, childcare, or health insurance. The pandemic has exacerbated the fault lines of an economy that was built on a foundation of inequity. It has challenged our physical, mental, and economic health. It has challenged families, communities, businesses, schools, and every department of local government. But it is lower-wage workers who have suffered the worst economic pain of the pandemic.

BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport is an economic engine for Anne Arundel County and all of Maryland. Many county residents have careers at the airport, and currently, the low wages at these facilities lead to employee turnover. This means the staff does not have time to be trained and retrained, to gain experience in how to respond to emergency situations, or to build the sense of normalcy at their worksites that is required to allow them to detect potential security incidents.

Higher wages at “heightened security locations” are not new and have been applied at Los Angeles International Airport, Oakland International Airport, the Port of Oakland, Newark Liberty International Airport, John F. Kennedy International Airport, and LaGuardia Airport, for example. In our region, Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport have adopted a wage policy in order to improve safety and security.

This Bill represents an opportunity to improve security, while also securing higher pay for valued local workers. A practical liveable income is important to the citizens of Anne Arundel County and helps to attract and retain good employees.

The Secure Maryland Wage Act will help make many lives stable and help support making Anne Arundel

County *The Best Place - For All*. For those reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on **House Bill 685**.