



## **Environment Committee**

**Committee:** Economic Matters

**Testimony on:** HB124 - "Occupational Safety and Health Standards to Protect Employees - Aerosol Transmissible Diseases and COVID-19"

**Organization:** Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee  
**Person**

**Submitting:** Diana Younts, co-chair

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** January 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB124.

Food and farm workers face unacceptable conditions across the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. Food and farmworkers are the backbone of our food system. Yet despite their integral contributions, farmworkers and their families face entrenched poverty, an unjust immigration system, and dangerous working conditions. Farm workers have been intentionally excluded from basic labor laws like the right to organize, minimum wage, and paid sick leave. COVID-19 has turned what was already a crisis into a mega-crisis.

We urge you to create permanent workplace safety standards so that workers are immediately protected in any future pandemics. As it stands today, there are Maryland workers – including food and farmworkers – who still are not provided adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), who are forced to stand shoulder to shoulder on poultry slaughter lines or lose their paychecks, who are being asked to come back to work when they are still sick, and who are too fearful to speak out for fear of retaliation from their employers. Without any enforceable and mandatory workplace safety standards in place for COVID-19, these employees have no recourse. And until our food and farmworkers are protected, our food supply chain remains at risk and community spread of this virus will continue.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB124.