

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,



This testimony is being submitted by myself, Maura Dwyer, a member of the Maryland Poor People's Campaign, on behalf of MD PPC. I am a resident of MD District 40. Please visit our Jubilee Campaign for more info on our core principals: <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/jubilee-platform/>

**I am here to ask the committee for a favorable vote for HB 685.**

This bill would raise standards for our essential workers at our state's transportation hubs. It would raise wages and give vital funds towards healthcare costs for these workers. I believe that the passing of

this bill is essential because these workers need better protection. This is a critical opportunity to alleviate racial wealth and health inequities for this nearly exclusively Black and immigrant workforce. Given the discrepancy in higher rates of covid among communities of color, it is criminal not to extend healthcare access and increased pay. We know that airport workers are overwhelmingly immigrants and people of color, who are [two to three times](#) more likely than our white counterparts to contract COVID-19 and nearly three times as likely to die from the virus. Access to affordable health care is a life saving measure, not just to safety of workers and travelers, but also to instilling the confidence necessary to get the public back to the airport and to keeping them up, and running again.

The Poor People's Campaign challenges the idea that our economy rewards hard-working individuals and, therefore, if only the millions of people in poverty acted better, worked harder, complained less and prayed more, they would be lifted up and out of their miserable conditions. Beginning in the 1970s, wages for the bottom 80 percent of workers have remained largely stagnant and today there are 64 million people working for less than \$15 an hour. That's an impossible way to make a living, no matter how hard you work. At the same time, the costs of basic needs like housing, health care and education have risen dramatically. Over the past 30 years, rents have gone up faster than income in nearly every urban area of the country. In 2016, there was no state or county in the nation where someone earning the federal minimum wage could afford a 2-bedroom apartment at market rent.

I use BWI/Penn station to travel for work almost every day. I believe the workers there need to have a living wage and access to quality healthcare because we all deserve the right to access healthcare and take care of our families. In the words of the Poor People's Campaign "Everyone has the right to live."

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Maura Dwyer  
3908 Falls Rd  
Baltimore MD 21211  
Maryland Poor People's Campaign