



Nina Beth Cardin  
HB0581/SB0486  
Maryland Essential Workers Protections Act  
Favorable  
February 3, 2012

Dear Chairman Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am not an essential worker and yet I, like everyone, am directly affected by this bill both practically and morally.

Practically, my well-being, and my ability to take care of my family are dependent on the health and well-being of our essential workers. Worried people everywhere in the midst of this pandemic are protecting themselves by steering clear of certain places while relying on essential workers who – out of dedication and desperation, needing to earn a paycheck - are daily returning to those places of danger without the necessary care and protection they deserved.

That is wrong. Morally, no one should have to decide whether to starve because they can't go back to an unsafe workplace, or get sick because they have to. Ethically, no one who works for us and supports us in our economic sector, allowing us to be safe, should be put in harm's way while serving us.

You, the members of the General Assembly were not called to return to work until your work conditions were safe. Appropriate distances, physical dividers, time of exposure to each other, protective equipment were all taken into consideration – not because there was a law that required it but because leadership knew that taking care of you, their “flock,” was the right and moral thing to do.

So too, we should not need this law for essential workers as we didn't need a law for the General Assembly. It should be self-evident that caring for the well-being of those who work under one's leadership is one of the most important parts of one's job.

Yet some leaders are not doing their job. So we must pass this law and protect some of the most vulnerable among us, who cannot choose not to work, who cannot choose to work from home, who have no sway over the behavior of their employers and who do not earn enough to provide protection and medical care for themselves.

I urge you to pass this bill and care for those who care for us.

Nina Beth Cardin  
Director, Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights