



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 2, 2021

To: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1199 Workers' Compensation – Occupational
Disease Presumptions – COVID-19

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

I write in support of HB1199 Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – COVID-19. While I withdrew my similar bill, HB765 Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – Novel Coronavirus (Essential Workers' Compensation Act), from the Committee's consideration and am instead supporting HB119 which is more comprehensive, I remain passionate about the underlying issues that led to filing this bill.

Over the course of the past year, first responders, and those taking care of their loved ones and ours, have continued to put their lives on the line for us throughout this pandemic, and they have stepped up to the plate and been there for us. Unfortunately, many of them have gotten sick and some have even died in the line of duty. And now, we are sending our educators, who would have been covered by an amendment I was prepared to submit, back into the classrooms. Classrooms are congregate settings with prolonged hours of exposure, which greatly increases the risk of infection. There is much concern that if proper precaution is not taken, educators will become sick and some will die, the same way our first responders have.

According to the National Council of State Legislatures, as of December 9, 2020, seventeen states and Puerto Rico have already made COVID a workplace related illness to be covered by insurance in certain instances. Nine states have established a presumption of workplace illness for certain types of workers: Illinois, New Jersey and Vermont cover all essential workers, while Wyoming and California cover all workers

otherwise covered by workers compensation. It's time for Maryland to join those states and provide this protection for our first responders and workers.

HB1199 will financially incentivize employers to take appropriate safety precautions for their employees and compensate those who are injured by making COVID-19 a presumptive workplace illness and eligible for Workers' Compensation.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1199.