



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 1012
BWI–Thurgood Marshall Workers’ Right to Reinstatement Act
Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
March 5th, 2021 • Economic Matters Committee

What the Bill Does

HB 1012 would ensure that Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport workers economically harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic have a path to re-employment when times return to normal. The bill would require BWI employers for an airport hospitality operation or airport service provider to offer open jobs to qualified employees laid off due to health or economic factors. Upon layoff, employers would be required to notify employees in writing, and keep that record on file for two years, allowing for their place to be held until fiscal recovery. Jobs must be offered in order of qualifications and length of previous tenure, and employees have ten days to accept or decline the offer. These sections may be enforced through civil action in Circuit Court, and failure to comply with this bill can result in injunctive relief, including mandating rehiring and requirement of backpay.

Why the Bill Is Important

Like many service workers in our economy, airport hospitality and service provider employees are dependent on a high volume of customers to ensure their job security; the more folks traveling through airports, the more business in BWI’s restaurants and retail stores. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, air travel has decreased precipitously; **as of November, BWI passenger volume was down over 60 percent from the year before.** As a result, businesses in BWI Airport were left with a tough decision: either quickly shutter their doors to save money, or operate at a loss until air travel resumes to its previous form.

In both cases, airport workers suffer. Many employees working for businesses that chose the former lost their jobs in March, during one of the worst economic recessions in American history — and likely have struggled to find work since. The outcome hasn’t been much better for those working for restaurants and stores trying to push through the difficult times. **Even the most successful businesses have had to lay off a significant portion of their workforce, like the popular Silver Diner, who reported over \$1 million in losses and had to lay off almost a quarter of their**



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BWI employees. Others haven't been as lucky, and have only been able to hold on to the bare minimum number of workers they need to stay open.

Luckily, there is hope for recovery. As of November, **60 percent of concessions stands in BWI were open and operating, up from 20 percent last spring.** As these shops start to reopen, they are finally able to slowly increase their workforce to pre-pandemic levels. However, as of now, there is no guarantee that hard-working, qualified, and tenured airport employees will be first in line to get their jobs back. That's where HB 1012 comes in.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

HB 1012 would make sure that certain BWI employees, who lost their jobs out of no fault of their own, are guaranteed their old roles when their employer reopens. Hiring back laid-off workers makes sense for all parties involved. On the side of workers, struggling Marylanders finally will have some sense of job security as conditions continue to improve. From the perspective of employers, these workers are qualified, experienced, and can quickly and easily integrate back into their roles; thus, management doesn't have to spend as much time seeking out or training new employees.

This is a common sense bill. If airport workers only lost their job because of unusually bad times, or due to a government shutdown, they should be able to return to their old jobs when economic and health conditions permit. HB 1012 would help make this goal a reality.

Maryland's economy works best when qualified and experienced workers are in the right roles. I urge a favorable report.