



HB 1012 SUPPORT
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HB 1012 SUPPORT

Thurgood Marshall BWI Workers' Right to Reinstatement Act.

House of Delegates Committee on Economic Matters

Friday, March 5, 2021 at 1:30pm

Good afternoon Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais and members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Roxie Herbekian and I am privileged to serve as the president of UNITE HERE Local 7. Our Union fights for livable wages, affordable healthcare and respect on the job for workers in the hospitality industry. Our members work in Maryland hotels, restaurants, University food service, casinos, event venues and airport food and retail.

The COVID 19 Pandemic has hit our industry very hard. In March of 2020, 97% of our members in Maryland and across the country were laid off. Currently approximately 65% are still laid off. At the airport only 18% are working.

We have spent the last year helping workers navigate Unemployment benefits, distributing much needed food and grocery store gift cards to hospitality workers and advocating for public policy to help workers get through this difficult period. We also mobilized 40 of our laid off members to spend two months in Nevada, Arizona, Florida, and Pennsylvania to get out the vote for President Biden and Vice President Harris last fall. Then another 20 members went to Georgia to help win the two democratic senate seats.

One of our focuses for public policy is for workers who have been laid of because of the Pandemic to be recalled to their pre-pandemic job as business returns. That's right, simply the right to go back to one's job. Several jurisdictions have already passed "Recall Legislation" including Washington. DC, Baltimore City, Philadelphia, Providence, Oakland, Los Angeles, New Haven and Santa Barbara

Airport travel at our State's Airport, Thurgood Marshall BWI, dropped by 70% at the start of the pandemic. It is now down by 60%. The MAA along with the rest of the air travel industry is projecting that we will return to pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2023 or early 2024.

Maryland has provided significant support to the private companies that operate at the Airport. The Board of Public Works at the end of February approved retroactive rent reduction for the food and retail operators that come under the “Fraport” umbrella at the costs of \$16.8 million to the State. All of these companies are also getting a 2 year extension on their leases so that they can make up some of the revenue that they have lost. In addition, private companies have had access to the federal PPP program and the CARES Retention Credit.

This Pandemic has been devastating for Employers and Employees alike. HB1012 is a way that Maryland can provide some security to the hundreds of airport workers who are laid off through no fault of their own. HB 1012 if enacted, will allow laid off workers to tell their landlords or creditors that they will be recalled to work once restrictions are lifted.

This is good public policy. We are all very hopeful that the vaccines will get COVID19 under control and we will once again be able to travel, eat in restaurants and resume other activity. In order for our economy to get up and running again people need to be back to work and earning a paycheck. At the airport we will also need to have experienced, trained workers who are already “badged” back at their stations to serve the public.

Please do the right thing.

I urge a favorable report on HB 1012