



Testimony to the House of Delegates Economic Matters Committee

Support for HB 581 - Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act

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Hearing Date: 2/5/2021

The American Association of University Women of Maryland supports the passage of HB 581, the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act. Founded in 1881, AAUW's approximately 170,000 members and 1,000 branches nationwide are leaders in gender equity research, advocacy, and philanthropy. In Maryland, we have over 4,000 members and supporters and 13 college and university partners.

This bill addresses the challenges that essential workers are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic: physical harm, loss of pay, health hazards and unjust work orders. The majority of essential workers in Maryland are women and the majority are people of color. The health and economic security of both women and communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

This bill would provide essential workers with better standards for safe working conditions during pandemics. It will provide for pandemic pay and the availability of health insurance during pandemics. The bill mandates a plan to be in place so that workers can understand their responsibilities during any pandemic. It guarantees that workers can refuse dangerous work without fear of retaliation from employers. Finally, the bill guarantees that workers be given leave to deal with family crises caused by the pandemic.

The American Association of University Women of Maryland urges passage of HB 581 to provide our essential workers with much needed protections in the workplace to ensure health, safety and security during pandemics.