



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Testimony on Maryland House Bill 581:  
Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an Emergency  
(Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act)**

TO: Del. Davis, Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee  
FROM: Rashad Lloyd, Progressive Maryland Justice Task Force Leader  
Prince George's County (D22).  
DATE: February 3, 2021  
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 581 Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

I just got my W-2 in the mail from 2020. For four months during the pandemic, I worked as an essential retail worker. I was hired at the MAX salary for my position at \$14/hr and at the time my place of employment offered workers \$2/hr extra as hazard pay. As the pandemic raged on and the company realized that this emergency was only going to escalate a decision was made to terminate the hazard pay program so that the company could remain profitable and sustainable into the future.

I worked for Total Wine and More, a company that Forbes in 2017 estimated was worth 3 billion dollars. A company worth that much decided it wasn't fiscally responsible to offer hazard pay to the workers who were risking their lives to generate those billions of dollars of profit. I'm here to say that in the four months I worked retail during this pandemic I made \$4,752.47 AFTER taxes, that comes out to less than \$400 per week. To my employer the total worth of both my labor and my life is less than \$400 per week and it is unacceptable, and the only way we stop this from happening to others is through the passage of this legislation.

We urge a favorable report on HB 581.