

**Testimony in Opposition to HB1154
Labor and Employment – Economic Stabilization Act - Alterations
March 9, 2021**

To: Hon. Dereck Davis, Chair and members of the House Economic Matters Committee
From: Michael Wilson, Executive Assistant to the President
United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Chair Davis and members of the Economic Matters Committee. I am here today on behalf of the members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Local 400. We represent over 10,000 members in Maryland working on the front lines of the ongoing pandemic in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, and health care.

UFCW Local 400 strongly opposes HB 1154, which is an attempt to weaken legislation our members fought hard to get enacted just last year, giving teeth to Maryland's Economic Stability Act.

At the end of 2019 hundreds of Maryland working families and the communities they support were hit with the devastating news, right before the holidays, that Shoppers Food was closing dozens of stores in the state. This announcement was made right before the holidays, and with only the notice required by federal law.

Shoppers parent company, SuperValu, based in Minnesota, had recently been acquired by an even larger out of state company, UNFI, based in Rhode Island. Despite the size of this company, because some stores did not meet the threshold of the number of full-time employees required for federal WARN Act protections, not all of the employees were given even the sixty days' notice required under that law.

Because these employees were members of our union we were able to fight for and negotiate some terms to ease their transition, but they were hurt by the fact that the Maryland Economic Stabilization Act at that time was just suggestions and not enforceable. These members came before you last year with their stories, urging you to make the stronger protections of the Maryland law enforceable. Working families across the state were served by the passage of that bill last year.

Now changes are being proposed that would make the Maryland bill no better than the federal law that failed these working families. All of these changes are designed to create exemptions and loopholes that will give other large companies an excuse not to comply, further harming working Marylanders. From attempting to increase the number of employees needed in the state, to adding a vague "definition" of permanent, attempting to allow companies to move locations and exempt

themselves, and writing in large, vague loopholes around companies seeking financing or other business circumstances, these changes are clearly intended to shield large businesses from having to fulfil their obligations to their Maryland employees.

We have been, and will continue to be, in discussion with the Maryland Chamber of Commerce regarding the potential for compromise on some proposed changes, but as presented **we strongly oppose HB 1154 and urge an unfavorable vote.**