



**Testimony on HB124**  
***Occupational Safety and Health Standards to Protect Employees - Aerosol Transmissible Diseases and COVID-19***  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the need to protect employees working in hazardous conditions from aerosol diseases including COVID-19 during a pandemic, we are supportive of HB124- The Occupational Safety and Health Standards to Protect Employees - Aerosol Transmissible Diseases and COVID-19 Act.

It is the state's duty to protect Maryland's essential workers amidst a pandemic. To date, over 340,000 Maryland residents have contracted COVID-19 and over 6,800 residents have lost their lives. The rate of infections is steadily increasing, particularly among essential workers like our members. Adopting occupational safety and health standards to prevent the spread of transmissible diseases is a simple way to protect essential workers. Maryland must reduce COVID-19 infection rates by establishing this protection in tandem with HB581- the Essential Workers Protection that mandates safe and hygienic working conditions during pandemics.

For 1199SEIU members who are our healthcare workers on the frontlines- this Act is vital to protecting their lives. Not only would this Act create increase protections for essential workers in danger of contracting COVID-19, but this Act would create standards to diminish contraction rates for future infectious diseases. More importantly we must ask ourselves, if we do not provide protections like these for the very people whose job is it to save our lives on a daily basis, then how can we count on when they're the first and last line of support.

For this reason, we believe that this Act will create the necessary structure in place to improve overall workplace safety for essential Maryland workers and ask that you support the Occupational Safety and Health Standards to Protect Employees - Aerosol Transmissible Diseases and COVID-19 Act.

Respectfully,

Ricarra Jones  
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