



Bill No: HB581  
Title: Maryland Health Equity Resource Act  
Committee: Economic Matters  
Hearing: February 5, 2021  
Position: SUPPORT

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The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW's purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **HB581 a priority on the [2021 MLAW Agenda](#) and we urge your support.**

HB581 will provide essential workers with much needed protections in the workplace to ensure employee health and safety during pandemics.

Essential workers are experiencing during the COVID 19 pandemic, the majority of whom are women and people of color. To date, essential workers have experienced unsafe working conditions where they have been physically harmed, loss of pay and benefits, health hazards, and unjust work orders. From COVID-19's inception, thousands of essential workers have also contracted this virus, and this bill not only provides protection to decrease the contraction rate, but it also provides other safeguards that give workers the confidence and security of knowing that they are not infecting their colleagues, family or community.

If this bill is enacted, it will provide women with protections and procedures against unfair treatment by employers, including arbitrary retaliation. The protections in this bill will ensure better standards to have safe and healthy working conditions so women do not have to engage in unsafe work practices that put their lives in danger. It will allow women to receive pandemic pay and the opportunity to be covered by health insurance during pandemics. Workers need plans of action during pandemics and as such, this bill mandates that a fair plan be set in place so workers understand their responsibilities during this and any future pandemics.

For many women, pandemic and bereavement leave is also a big factor in order to care for their families and due to this, this bill ensures that workers are given leave to handle various severe circumstances. Last but certainly not least, this bill provides women the right to refuse dangerous work without retaliation if management encourages female essential workers to put their lives at risk. Conclusively, this bill provides workplace protections for essential workers to ensure that have safe working conditions during pandemics.

**For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of HB581.**

**Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**  
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## MLAW's 2021 Agenda is supported by the following organizations:

AAUW Anne Arundel County  
AAUW Easton Branch  
AAUW Kensington Rockville Branch  
American Association of University Women (AAUW) Maryland  
Anne Arundel County NOW  
Baltimore NOW (National Organization for Women)  
Bound for Better, Advocates for Domestic Violence Survivors  
Business and Professional Women Maryland  
Calvert County Commission for Women  
Cambridge Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Charles County Commission for Women  
Childway Early Learning Center  
Church Women United  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Annapolis Alumnae Chapter  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Kappa Phi Chapter  
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Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Maryland Family Network  
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Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
Maryland NOW  
Maryland Women's Heritage Center  
Mission 50  
MoCoWoMen  
Montgomery County Commission for Women  
Montgomery County NOW (National Organization for *Women*)  
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club  
Montgomery County Young Democrats  
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women., Inc. Anne Arundel County Chapter  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County Chapter  
Planned Parenthood of Maryland  
Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington DC  
Prince George's County Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.  
Reproductive Justice Inside  
Stella's Girls Inc.  
The Rest Of A Life (TROAL)  
Top Ladies of Distinction  
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Patuxent River Chapter  
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UAW Local 1183  
WISE  
Women's Equality Day 2020 Celebration Coalition  
Women's Law Center of Maryland