

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1326
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave
Economic Matters
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1326 which closes gaps in state and federal sick leave law, during public health emergencies. The bill also repeals exemptions from the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act for agricultural workers, temporary workers, and on-call health professionals, to make sure all Maryland workers can have access to necessary leave during public health emergencies.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA supports the belief that all Maryland workers should have access to adequate sick leave. This need is even more paramount during times of public health emergency. Many Maryland workers have not had access to sick leave throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency due to exemptions from Maryland's law or from the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. With the expiration of the federal act on December 31, 2020, the gap in coverage of Marylanders without any access to sick leave further expanded.

HB 1326 allows all workers covered by the law to have access to and the ability to use, when necessary, and only during a public health emergency, 14 more days of paid emergency sick leave to allow adequate time to isolate or quarantine as recommended by public health officials.

HB 1326 is designed to address deficiencies in the Healthy Working Families Act exposed by the ongoing public health emergency and will ensure that more workers have access to baseline workplace protections.

MSEA requests a favorable report on House Bill 1326.