

# *Marylanders for Patient Rights*

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## **Marylanders for Patient Rights SUPPORTS HB581**

Chair Dereck Davis  
House Economic Matters Committee  
House Office Building, Room 231  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Davis,

On behalf of Marylanders for Patient Rights, I am writing in **SUPPORT OF HB 581**, the Maryland Essential Workers Protections Act. The vital and fundamental protections provided by this bill will help to preserve the health, safety, and livelihoods of essential workers and their family members.

During the current pandemic, essential workers were all too often left without personal protective equipment (PPE), adequate testing, or hazard pay while they risked their lives to protect others. We as a society owe these workers not only a huge debt of gratitude, but also the means by which they and their families can remain healthy and maintain their source of income.

As a patient advocate and microbiologist, I was extremely alarmed by the neglect of workers at long term care facilities, where the pandemic took so many lives. Reports of workers provided with garbage bags and hairnets in lieu of adequate PPE were horrifying. The delay of testing for caregivers for many months resulted in a rapid and deadly spread of COVID-19 through vulnerable elderly communities.

Moreover, it is of vital importance that essential workers be provided with hazard pay and sick and bereavement leave. I'd like to provide a personal example. We had a wonderful caregiver at a local assisted living facility who cared for a family friend with advanced dementia. When the caregiver lost her husband last July, she was only able to afford two days of leave: the day her husband died and the following day to notify her family and to plan a funeral. This is a travesty. In addition, my family friend, like many who suffer from dementia, refused to wear a mask. This put her caregiver at additional risk in a congregate living situation. This is why hazard pay and bereavement leave are so important.

The standards and procedures outlined in HB 581 are commonsense and reasonable. I strongly urge the House Economic Matters Committee to support provide a FAVORABLE report for HB581 to help keep all our essential workers safe.

Thank you,

*Anna Palmisano*

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