

SB542 Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

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Health and Human Services
Subcommittee

Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

Audit

Children, Youth, and Families

Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight

Pensions

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

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Testimony for Senate Bill 542

State Health Care Facilities - Employees - Alternative Workweeks

Finance Committee

February 18, 2021

Madame Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 542 - State Health Care Facilities - Employees - Alternative Workweeks. This bill authorizes full-time employees working at Department of Health (MDH) clinical facilities to work three twelve-hour shifts rather than a traditional forty-hour week. Employees will still receive full-time status and benefits.

Current law and regulations prohibit employees working less than forty-hours a week from receiving full-time benefits. Senate Bill 542 clarifies and permits three twelve-hour shifts, in place of forty-hours, for the purpose of calculating benefits.

The workweek structure outlined under Senate Bill 542 mirrors those found in facilities outside of MDH. Three twelve-shifts are standard practice around the health care industry and will allow MDH to be more competitive in the recruitment and retention of full-time nurses. This bill can be implemented with existing fiscal and operational resources, and may reduce costs, as well.

Thank you for your consideration and I respectfully ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 542.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Addie C. Eckardt".

Senator Addie C. Eckardt

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Uploaded by: Bennardi, Maryland Department of Health /Office of Governmen

Position: INFO



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 542– State Health Care Facilities - Employees - Alternative Workweeks – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for House Bill 673 (HB 673) – State Health Care Facilities - Employees - Alternative Workweeks. This bill would authorize full-time employees working at the Department’s clinical facilities to work three twelve-hour shifts in lieu of the traditional eight hour a day, five days per week schedule and still receive full-time status and benefits. We ask for a favorable report from the Committee on the amended bill that will be put forth by the Sponsor.

Last year, HB 1663/SB 1080 was passed as emergency legislation and temporarily permitted (it expires April 30, 2021) the Governor to authorize the three twelve-hour alternative schedules during the coronavirus emergency for AFT registered nurses only. HB 673 allows for the same thing but applies to all employees working at Department-owned facilities that operate 24 hours a day, seven days per week in accordance with any collective bargaining agreements allowing an alternative work week. Now more than ever we need to take proactive measures to retain the healthcare staff we currently employ and fill our current vacancies. The ability for a potential employee to work three twelve-hour shifts is an attractive recruitment tool that can help achieve both of these goals.

The Department employs approximately 600 Registered Nurses out of a roughly 3000 person staff at our health care facilities. The majority of these positions perform direct nursing care functions. This bill would authorize the Secretary to more closely align nursing schedules at Department-operated facilities with non-state hospitals operating in Maryland and nationally. Current law and Department of Budget and Management regulations prohibit an employee who works less than a 40-hour work from receiving full-time employee benefits. The bill permits three twelve-hour shifts to count as equivalent to the traditional 40-hour work week for these positions. It will be an added option to current scheduling models.

The Department can implement this legislation using existing Departmental fiscal and operational resources. HB 673 has the potential to decrease the amount of overtime dollars paid

to nurses at Department facilities; in addition, the increased flexibility in scheduling will enhance our ability to recruit full-time nurses to fill existing vacancies because it is standard practice in the healthcare industry.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me at (410) 260-3190/webster.ye@maryland.gov or Heather Shek, Deputy Director of Governmental Affairs at heather.shek@maryland.gov and the same phone number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Webster Ye".

Webster Ye
Assistant Secretary, Health Policy