

SECURE WAGE ACT (3)

Good afternoon. My name is Akalu Tirfie. I work as a Passenger Service Agent for a contractor, Prospect Airport Services at BWI Airport. I help people with disabilities to get to their flights in time, and help them with their luggage. Our passengers have different disabilities including mental, and serving them, we should have individual approach with full alert. It is a physical work as well. Walking up to 12 miles a day, sometimes even running because of the lateness of a passenger, makes the job **physically exhausting**. This in turn, makes impossible for me to do anything after work, let alone to have another extra, at least a part time job. And this makes my income so **scanty**. Furthermore, the job as a physical work, causes a physical health problem. I and some of my coworkers suffer from back pain.

I have health insurance from the state Maryland because the one offered company is very expensive. For sick time we are only given the paid sick time law that allows us to have up to 5 days of sick time but sometimes that is not enough. Often times I still go to work because we don't have enough sick leave and because we are tipped workers we always try to go to work because we need the tips which we don't get when we call out sick. I always try to go to work even if I have problems or I'm sick because I need the money. I've been frightened to go to work because of the virus because I could get sick and I only have the 5 days of sick time but I have to go to work to pay my bills.

I have been risking my life and working during the whole COVID 19 period. At the time of the outbreak of the corona virus, many of my coworkers left their jobs due to the virus threat. They were unexpectedly, but fortunate that they were found eligible for unemployment benefit. But for those of us who continued working, our company cut our working hours and we were paid so less to exist, but not small enough for us to be eligible for unemployment benefit. We faced such unfairness despite the fact that we risked and still risking our life. Moreover I am at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 because of **my age, my high blood pressure and diabetes**.

Airport is a highly secured area. Working there, might be potentially dangerous. The company doesn't take all these into account. It has **no incentive** and **no**

benefit for employees. It's principle looks as **"work while able to work"**. I am sorry to say, but this reminds me a **"use and throw"** concept.

Because of all that I tried to say above, **The Maryland secure wage act** is the only **remedy** that would help me, my coworkers and our families.

Thank you.