

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SENATE BILL 653:

Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Applicability

TO: Hon. Chair Delores G. Kelley, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Korey Johnson, Esq., Senior Policy Research Analyst – Job Opportunities Task Force
DATE: February 25, 2021

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We oppose Senate Bill 653 as a means of ensuring that hardworking Marylanders can continue to access our paid sick and safe leave law without having to risk their job, paycheck, or financial security.

On February 1, 2018, over 700,000 Marylanders began to accrue earned sick and safe leave under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act (HB 1 of 2017) after a long six (6) year fight. This long fight involved much negotiation and compromise to make sure that both businesses and workers are considered equitably when it comes to earned sick and safe leave. However, when it comes to earned sick leave, state-by-state we know that working families are the most vulnerable. No one should have to choose between their health and their job, yet an absence or delay of earned sick leave makes this choice ever-present for working families. Most importantly though, the absence or delay of earned sick leave means the increasing pressure and fear of losing income, which for a low-wage working family can ultimately mean the loss of stability on a variety of levels: family, economic, health, and more. Any alteration of earned sick and safe leave for Marylanders will only cause more harm and ultimately becomes counterproductive to the six years of progress Maryland has already made.

SB 653 seeks to exempt from the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act construction industry employees who are covered by a certain collective bargaining agreement.

JOTF is committed to opposing any legislation that seeks to undermine the hard work of countless legislators and advocates across the state to ensure that the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act continues as current law. We believe that what is proposed in Senate Bill 653 only serves to disrupt low-wage workers access to better job security. SB 653, as it would limit the millions of hard-working Marylanders, in particular low-income workers who are least able to lose even a single paycheck, can take necessary time off for family and medical life events without the risk of falling into poverty. For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report of Senate Bill 653.