

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SENATE BILL 594:**

Labor and Employment-Maryland Healthy Working Families Act- Verification

**TO:** Hon. Delores Kelley, Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

**FROM:** Korey T. Johnson, Esq., Senior Policy Researcher

**DATE:** February 25, 2021

JOTF is an independent, non-profit organization that has worked hard serving low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. Our mission is to develop policies and programs that increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes for individuals who seek to become economically self-reliant. JOTF opposes Senate Bill 594 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.

In 2018, JOTF worked with over 150 partners to pass the Maryland Healthy Working Family Act (MHWFA), ensuring that the majority of the hard-working Marylanders have access to five business days of paid or unpaid sick and safe leave. This was a heavy lift in the 2017 legislature and many negotiations were made in a bi-partisan fashion. Senate Bill 594 now seeks to restrict the use of sick and safe leave to the verifications and regulations of the employer which is counter to the bill's purpose- to give employees their due rights.

### **Below please find, the negatively impacted demographics:**

**Religious Communities:** Some religious practices do not allow the use of certain western/traditional medications or psychological treatments. Therefore, a promissory note from a certified physician may not be obtainable. E.g. (Jehovah's Witnesses, The Amish, Muslims, and Christian Scientist)

**Low Wage Workers:** Many low-income families do not have the funds to obtain affordable healthcare. This causes individuals to spend an excessive amount on conditions/illnesses that can be treated holistically or at home.

**Coronavirus Testers:** Although, tests for the coronavirus are free to the public, scheduling an appointment may be difficult. Appointments are scheduled days in advance and walk-in testing is not allowed. This process may require over two consecutive days.

**Asthmatics:** During this pandemic, certain individuals are more susceptible to COVID-19. Asthmatics, especially, conduct forms of self-medication that do not require verification from certified physicians.

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JOTF stands firm on protecting sick and safe leave for workers. This bill will restrict leave rights to workers unnecessarily during a global pandemic and we see this to be wholly unnecessary. The MHWFA confirmed that for every 30 hours worked, one hour of paid leave is to be honored to the employee by law. There is no solid reasoning to cripple these rights at this critical time. If the employee puts the work in, he/she has earned that time to use. For these reasons, we oppose Senate Bill 594.