



## **Testimony on SB725**

### ***Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19 Act of 2021***

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the need to fiscally support and relieve health issues for certain essential workers, we are supportive of SB725- The Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19 Act of 2021.

Nearly 380,000 Maryland residents have contracted COVID-19 thus far, and over 7,800 residents have lost their lives. A number of those residents who work in the emergency services sector contracted COVID-19 such as firefighters and police officers. Under current law, workers who cannot link exposure to COVID-19 directly to their worksite activities, are often denied employer and workers' compensation claims. Many workers thus find themselves financially strained and without work for extended periods due to this systemic flaw. Therefore, this legislation is necessary to categorizing COVID-19 as an occupational disease which will give thousands of workers access to a more just compensation process.

Our members are doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals that not only interact with the public during this pandemic, but specifically treat members of the public that are positive for COVID-19. Like our members, this bill concentrates on emergency services workers who also interact with the public daily to keep our communities safe. In this capacity, we stand with our brothers and sisters that put their lives on the line just as much as healthcare workers and believe that their daily sacrifice should be financially valued if COVID-19 contraction occurs.

For this reason, we believe that this Act will provide a financial safety net for essential Maryland workers and ask that you support SB725- Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19 Act of 2021.

Respectfully,

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