



Testimony on SB812
Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19
Position: FAVORABLE with AMENDMENT

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Senate 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 SB812- Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19.

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, police officers and healthcare workers. Under current law, workers who cannot link exposure to COVID-19 directly to their worksite activities, are often denied employer and workers' compensation benefits. 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. Moreover, they have even contracted COVID-19 merely just for attempting to treat COVID-19 positive patients. For this reason, we find this bill important because it covers our members as well as other 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.

Although we are supportive of this legislation, we believe this bill should cover all essential workers who reports to their respective worksite due to the inherited risk they take on to work for their employer. With this friendly amendment, we ask this Committee to give a favorable report on SB812- Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - COVID-19.

Respectfully,

Ricarra Jones
Maryland/DC Political Director
1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers- East
Cell: [443-844-6513](tel:443-844-6513)