

As a rabbi, and as co-chair of the Maryland Poor People's Campaign, I write in favor of the Secure Maryland Wage Act. These workers are on the front lines of providing safe transportation across Maryland. While it is a moral and biblical imperative to provide safe working conditions and appropriate remuneration, at this time especially, we need to make sure that these essential workers – crucial to the functioning of our infrastructure, and thus to many other essential workers, as well - are provided with a living wage and health insurance.

Scriptures emphasizes in several places the obligations that we have towards workers at all, normal times: we are always obligated to minimize risk to them, pay them adequately and on time. But in a time of pandemic, we have a special obligation to make sure that their safety is secure, and that they themselves are able to access healthcare.

In addition, Scripture also tells us that all of humanity has one ancestor, and that we are all made b'tzelem elohim – in God's image – and so we are obligated to fight racism and unequal treatment. Yet, we also know that the majority of low wage workers at BWI are people of color. By raising wages and giving access to quality healthcare we begin to address this inequality, and uplift not only these individuals, but their communities. This is especially important now, since it is also people of color who have been most affected by the pandemic: more likely to lost jobs, face foreclosure, and to become ill and to die of this disease. This is morally wrong as well as bad for our state.

No truly religious person offers mere thoughts and prayers; God demands action and change. As representative for the Maryland PPC as well as as a woman of faith, I call on the state to pass the Secure Maryland Wage Act, SB 107.

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