



**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
HB 813 – Workers’ Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – COVID-19
March 2, 2021**

SUPPORT

Chair Kelley and members of the committee, on behalf of our more than 20,000 state, county and municipal government workers in Maryland, we urge a favorable report on SB 813.

Presumptive language to cover COVID-19 is needed for workers who have risked their health and lives to keep us safe, fed and healthy during the pandemic. These employees, who are required to report to work despite the risks to their health and lives - are our heroes. They must be protected against losing their jobs, pay and benefits if they become ill from COVID-19 while at work.

Research by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) shows it takes an average of two weeks for a person with mild case of COVID-19, or up to six weeks for severe or critical cases to recover.¹ The vast majority of workers will use their sick and vacation time at 100% pay, before they apply for workers compensation.

For those who must apply, they must not have the added burden of proving they contracted COVID-19 on the job. Essential workers who risk so much, should be able to keep their jobs while recovering from COVID-19 and their employer health benefits. To lose pay and benefits will require the State to pick-up the tab for unemployment insurance and Medicaid.

Many states have already adopted presumptive language for essential and frontline workers or have pending legislation. According to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL)²:

- Nine states have enacted legislation creating a presumption of coverage of workers.
- Another four states including California and Kentucky have taken executive action to provide coverage to other essential workers.

The state’s economy heavily depends on these workers to stay on the job during the pandemic. Employees on the frontlines of the battle against the virus are deeply concerned that if they succumb to the virus, they, their families and dependents will not be financially protected.

Maryland needs to adopt presumptive language on COVID-19 for essential workers. We ask for a favorable report on SB 813. Thank you.

Marietta English, President

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6930e1.htm>

² <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/covid-19-workers-compensation.aspx>