

Good afternoon, my name is Shale Green, I'm from Baltimore City and a member of 32BJ SEIU.

I've been working as a security officer at the Port of Baltimore for three years

To be perfectly clear, we are on the frontlines and we are the first line of defense.

With so many trailers and ships, you never know what or when the next threat or target will be.

When you get paid lower wages, it can be hard to do the job you want to do.

If you have children, the stress over worrying about bills and childcare on these wages can be distracting.

In my experience, the lower wages mean that more people will call out because they have another job interview.

When that happens, guards like me who are on duty at the time have to stay over.

That can leave us sleep deprived which makes it much harder to focus and harder to catch everything the way I want to, that may come in or look out of place.

However, if you pay well enough, people will be willing to stay – we have to make sure everyone has the resources to come to work.

I have health insurance that I pay for out of pocket because the insurance I'm offered health insurance through my job is too expensive and has low coverage. So it was better for me to get other health insurance. Those who cannot afford to do this get healthcare through the state exchange, which the state pays for anyways. They rob Peter to pay Paul. That doesn't make sense.

Recently I even got sick and I needed to leave early. I ended getting a write up for leaving early even though I was sick. This makes me nervous to take time off in the future if I'm sick. Usually I try to push through and go to work even if I'm sick. There's a sign on my security booth that says "if you're sick, stay home" but I feel like I can't always do that if I might get in trouble.

When you protect your home, you don't get the cheapest alarm system out there –you want the best.

You need to hire and pay those who are protecting our ports a wage that matches the seriousness of our job.

Most of the guards at the Port of Baltimore are African American and need to support their families, especially during the crisis that we are experiencing. The Port is still a very big business for the State, yet we are not compensated in a manner that reflects the importance of our work.

Please do the right thing and pass the Secure Maryland Wage Act. Thank you.