

**SB 727 – Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act –
Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave**

Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee, March 17, 1:00 pm

The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act was a hard fought but important victory. United Workers, along with countless organizations and workers, pushed to secure this significant advancement in worker's rights in Maryland. People should never have to choose between their health or their jobs. Far too often, workers without Sick and Safe Leave have had to make difficult choices. No one should have to fear retaliation or losing employment simply because they need time to care for themselves or a sick loved one. Now, during the global pandemic, this type of leave saves lives.

It is critical that working people, like the members of United Workers, are protected. SB 727 would ensure that all workers are covered under the law and have access to leave during a medical emergency. This type of change is needed to ensure health and safety, but to also right historic and entrenched wrongs. Low wage workers of color face a multitude of challenges today. COVID-19 has brought devastating consequences for poor communities and communities of color who were already laboring under unfair conditions. These communities are dealing with health crises and deaths, housing instability and eviction, as well food and economic insecurity. If we aim to pursue social, racial, and economic justice in our State, we have to address the disadvantages our system creates and perpetuates. By removing exemptions, SB 727 will help address these wrongs by including all workers, especially those industries and sectors whose workforces are predominantly people of color. We believe that work with dignity is a human right. We must take lessons from our history and our present. Recovery from this crisis demands that we mitigate harm and prioritize health, safety, and well-being. SB 727 will help us achieve that. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 727.

Respectfully,

Adriana Foster
United Workers