

AFT HEALTHCARE-MARYLAND

Bill Number – HB 673

Hearing Date – 02/16/2021

Committee – Health and Government Operations

Position – Support with Amendments

Good afternoon, Chair Pendergrass and members of the committee, my name is Rosemary Wertz and I am the Field Coordinator for AFT Healthcare-Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 673 with amendments.

AFT Healthcare-Maryland is a labor union representing state employees in healthcare professional classifications. Our members include Registered Nurses, Therapists, Counselors, Physicians and other professional classifications in healthcare. As the exclusive representative we negotiate a memorandum of understanding, or contract, with the state department of budget and management.

In 2019, AFT Healthcare and the state of Maryland agreed to a new alternative workweek to be offered to Registered Nurses working in Maryland Department of Health facilities. Registered Nurses working in private industry have had the option to work 12 hour shifts for many years. Typically, these nurses will work three twelve hour shifts for a total of 36 hours a week and be considered full time employees. Some Maryland state nurses have been working 12 hour shifts for years. These nurses are spread out all over the state. They work at Spring Grove Hospital, Clifton T. Perkins Hospital, Springfield Hospital, in Central Maryland as well as facilities on the shore and in Western Maryland. The problem we were attempting to address through our discussions with the state is the requirement that all state employees must work 40 hours a week to be considered full time. Nurses in these facilities currently working twelve hour shifts must use 4 hours of earned leave or work an additional 4 hour shift to make 40 hours to be considered full time.

State Personnel and Pensions Article §7-701 defines Part time employment as an employee who works between 50% to 100% of the regular 40 hour workweek. This section of the law also requires that part time employees have their benefits prorated. Therefore, under the current law, a nurse working three twelve hour shifts per week would be considered a part time employee and would have their benefits prorated at 90%. Benefits include health insurance, leave and retirement. This bill will allow employees working a 36 hour workweek to keep their full time status and benefits. The 36 hour workweek will enhance recruitment of RN's in our understaffed state facilities. In addition, our members want additional shift options which support a work/life balance.

AFT Healthcare-Maryland and the Maryland Department of Health have negotiated an amendment to the bill to address our concerns about overtime compensation. You have our negotiated amendment. We, therefore, urge the committee for a favorable report to support House Bill 673 with an amendment.

Thank you,

Rosemary L. Wertz, Field Coordinator

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