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BILL NO.: HB 581

TITLE: Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an
Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act)

SPONSOR: Delegate Davis

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 5, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 581 – Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act). This bill requires essential employers to provide necessary financial assistance and make available protections for employees in the event of a health emergency.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing residents into their homes for work and recreation, there are a large number of Marylanders who have not had the option to do so. Essential workers have been ceaselessly fighting the pandemic on the front lines for nearly a year. Our health professionals, public safety personnel, custodial workers, and so many others have worked in higher risk environments and been exposed to the virus at a disproportionately higher rate. As a result, essential workers have significantly suffered through the pandemic.

It is not enough to simply express gratitude towards our heroes. It is critical that protections are provided to them which extend far into the future. No essential worker deserves to suffer financially or endure illness while doing their job. HB 581 guarantees protections moving forward by raising the pay of essential workers during emergencies and requiring the formation of a pandemic preparedness protocol. With these procedures in place, essential workers do not have to suffer more than others while maintaining vital services.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 581. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.