



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Testimony of Larry Stafford, Jr., Executive Director of Progressive Maryland

HB 431 – Maryland Fair Scheduling Act

February 22, 2022

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of House Bill 431. Progressive Maryland is a statewide grassroots organization with over 100,000 members, supporters, and affiliates who live in nearly every legislative district across the state. Our mission is to improve the lives of working people and families in Maryland. **Please note Progressive Maryland's strong support for HB 431, the Maryland Fair Scheduling Act.**

This legislation will begin to address the problem of unpredictable, unfair, and inflexible shift scheduling in Maryland's retail and food service industries. Large employers in these industries have long engaged in unethical scheduling practices, regularly adding or cutting employee shifts at the last minute to maximize company profits by squeezing them out of workers forced to keep their schedules "open and available" to respond to sudden changes. Increasingly, these practices are supported by "just-in-time" scheduling algorithms that alter shift assignments in real time with little warning to workers. Schedules can change by the hour in response to factors that range from fluctuations in customer demand to shifts in the weather forecast.

These unethical practices force workers to rearrange their lives – and those of their family members and children – to respond to the whims of company profit margins, typically for artificially low wages that fail to reflect the value of their labor in the first place. Unsurprisingly, data shows us that the burdens of these practices fall disproportionately on low-income workers and workers of color. It should be emphasized that many of the workers most affected by such scheduling practices are "essential workers," those who have kept our economy running throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by providing critical goods and services to Marylanders. It's past time that we actually treat them as essential.

Already, fair workweek laws and regulations are state policy in California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The working people of Maryland are calling on our representatives in the General Assembly to implement these protections here. **We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 431.**

Larry Stafford, Jr.
Executive Director
Progressive Maryland