



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 78:

Discrimination in Employment - Reasonable Accommodations for Applicants With Disabilities

TO: Hon. C.T. Wilson, Chair, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Senior Policy Advocate

DATE: January 25, 2022

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. JOTF supports House Bill 78 as a means to remove barriers and increase investments in low-wage workers and workers with disabilities to employment.

In Maryland, [8.6 percent of persons from the ages 21 to 64](#) live with some form of disability. This is slightly below the national average of 10.7 percent as documented in 2015. The poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities was 21.2 percent and the employment rate of working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in MD was 42.4 percent. Suffice to say, persons living with disabilities are significantly less advantaged in the search for stable employment than those without. A similar study in 2017 found that 17 percent of men and 18 percent of women living with disabilities in the U.S. remain unsuccessful in securing employment despite hours of interviewing and job searching.

At the heart of this issue remains a stigma against hiring individuals who are experiencing disabilities. Even when disabled persons manage to obtain employment, they statistically earn 16% less than non-disabled persons. Regardless of an employer's rationale behind this conundrum, disabled persons still have to work to secure the finances necessary to provide for themselves and possible family members. JOTF believes that everyone deserves access to economic opportunities regardless of disability. If they have the competency to do the work, then they should both be compensated on par with a similarly competent colleague and have any hindrances to their viability of success on the job removed.

House Bill 78 seeks to prohibit an employer from failing or refusing to make reasonable accommodations for the known disability of an otherwise qualified applicant for employment. The bill is tailored to prevent any added hardship to employers and we believe that its passage will lead to more equitable workplaces around the state. For those reasons, we urge a favorable vote on House Bill 78.