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HB 431 – Maryland Fair Scheduling Act
Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee, February 22, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization that seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project aims to ensure that our state's low-wage workers receive fair and full payment for their labor, as well as other basic protections on the job. The PJC **supports HB 431** and urges a **favorable** report.

Half of Maryland's total workforce is comprised of hourly workers who are more likely to experience volatile and precarious schedules. Workers cannot predict their hours or pay from day to day, make time for schooling or to care for children or family, secure a second job or qualify for promotions to full-time employment. These workers are more likely to have employers who schedule them to be on-call with no guarantee of work or pay, cancel shifts at the last minute or send them home early without paying them. At the same time, employees are expected to be available at any and all hours. If workers limit their availability at all or they cannot meet their employer's last-minute demands, employees are punished with fewer hours or other retaliation.

For the restaurant and retail workers the bill covers, the Fair Scheduling Act will help reduce the volatility of workers' schedules. Workers, particularly women, are forced to juggle childcare and other responsibilities with fluctuating schedules, a nearly-impossible balancing act over which they can exert little control. Hourly workers – a growing proportion of Maryland's workforce – need a fair work week to earn a family sustaining paycheck. Scheduling practices have a particularly harmful effect on women with caregiving responsibilities and effectively limit their opportunities in the workplace.

HB 431 is a pared down version of a similar bill introduced in prior years. Compared to these earlier bills, it covers fewer workers (only workers at chain restaurants and chain retail stores) and provides fewer protections (for example, it does not require advance notice of schedule changes). However, it would still provide a meaningful improvement over the status quo for those workers it does cover.

For these reasons, the Public Justice Center SUPPORTS HB 431 and requests a FAVORABLE report.