

Testimony in Support of SB 530

Labor and Employment - Maryland Fair Scheduling Act

TO: Hon. Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Senate Finance
Committee

FROM: Kayla Mock, Political Organizer

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Chair Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I appreciate the chance to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, working on the front lines of the ongoing pandemic in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, and healthcare. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers.

We strongly support SB 530 and urge this committee to vote it favorably.

In most of the industries we at the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400 (UFCW 400) represent, we see the importance of fair scheduling. Retail schedules are often unpredictable, posted with late notice, and often leaves workers stressed, vulnerable, and feeling as though they are constantly “on call” to pick up shifts when called in, even though the nature of their work is not on call. It can be exhausting and expensive.

The burden of home care and childcare also often falls to women, meaning unpredictable schedules disproportionately affect them. The National Women’s Law Center found “unfair work schedules make it difficult for women to access healthcare for themselves and their loved

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ones, noting that medical appointments often need to be made well in advance, an impossibility when workers do not know their schedules until days before their shifts.”

As an organizer talking to non-unionized workers, I once heard from a worker who had to leave their job, citing the unpredictable scheduling and late notice shifts left her unable to arrange affordable childcare. It became too expensive for her to work. Her and her child were then both places on state provided benefits, as she also lost her employer provided healthcare. Another worker once told me they had to leave their job because they could not schedule chemotherapy treatments with constant schedule changes, and it literally became a choice of their life or their job.

Fair scheduling fosters healthy practices that allow time for life planning, sleep, commuting, caring for children, a household, or oneself. Fair scheduling also relieves stress, promoting better mental health practices through work life balance. Workers with fair scheduling employers often feel more secure, cared for, and happier at work and home.

Fair scheduling is also good for businesses, with multiple studies finding business with implementing predictable scheduling have a decrease in worker turnover, have simpler time tracking on payroll, and increase their worker productivity. Harvard Kennedy’s School’s Shift Project found that fair scheduling “increased worker happiness and sleep quality, reduced material hardship, and allowed workers to schedule and pay for medical care.” It is simple – workers who know their schedules, who can adequately plan their lives are more productive at work.

We at UFCW 400 are proud to have several collective bargaining agreements that implement fair scheduling standards, some very similar to those proposed here, such as Giant Food and Safeway. We are happy to report these companies are still profitable and have a flexible work force. They are able to schedule employees when they need them, call workers in if things are busy, send workers home if it is slow, and create schedules based on peak and valley business. All this bill does is create a sustainable practice to scheduling that allows the workers freedom to plan their lives. Everyone deserves access to a fair and predictable schedule.

On behalf of our members and all of Marylanders, we urge a favorable report from this committee on SB 530, The Maryland Fair Scheduling Act.