



Testimony in Support of **HB 724**

Maryland Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2023

February 21 at 1:00pm

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation – representing 10,000 healthcare workers in long-term care facilities and hospitals across Maryland. Our union supports HB 724: Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2023 and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has underscored the importance of unemployment insurance to support the health of our families, communities, and the economy. 1199 SEIU supports building economic security through comprehensive UI reform. Maryland’s unemployment insurance system is outdated and lagging compared to other states who have built strong safety nets and thriving economies.

We support sponsor Delegate Charkoudian in the following:

1. Set maximum weekly benefit to 2/3 times the average weekly wage and minimum weekly benefit to 15% of average weekly wage.
2. Sets income disregard to 50% of individual’s entitled weekly benefit amount in order to reduce current economic disincentive for part-time work.
3. Allows dependent allowance at ¼ of minimum WBA for up to 4 dependents.
4. Indexes taxable wage base up to 25% of average weekly wage.
5. Improves tax structure by changing number of years in the benefit ratio for employer experience rating from 3 to 5.
6. Cushions recessionary increases by moving more than two tables “down” in any one year.
7. Requiring a bond for private equity firms with high debt ratios.

It’s long overdue to modernize our unemployment insurance system. This legislation prevents families from falling into poverty while supporting the local economy during challenging periods. For the reasons above, we urge a favorable committee report on HB 724.

In unity,

Ricarra Jones

Political Director, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East

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