

HB 349 - Labor and Employment - Maryland Fair Scheduling Act

SUPPORT

February 10, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

From: Kayla Mock, Political & Legislative Director
United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the House Economic Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, who have worked the frontlines and have been essential employees 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 HB 349 and urge this committee to vote it favorably.

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

The burden of home care and childcare often falls to women, meaning unpredictable schedules and changes disproportionately affects them. The National Women’s Law Center found, “unfair work schedules make it difficult for women to access healthcare for themselves and their loved 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, I had the opportunity to talk to multiple non-unionized workers. One worker stated that she had to leave her job, as the unpredictable scheduling and late notice shifts left her unable to arrange affordable childcare. It became too expensive for her to work. Therefore, she and her child were both placed on state provided benefits, as she 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; it became a choice of their life or their job.

Fair scheduling fosters healthy practices allowing time for life planning, sleep, commuting, caring for children, a household, or oneself. Fair scheduling also relieves stress, which promotes 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 beneficial for businesses. Multiple studies find that businesses who implement 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.

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To: The Honorable Chair Wilson

From: Kayla Mock, UFCW Local 400

UFCW Local 400 is proud to have several collective bargaining agreements that implement fair scheduling standards, some homogeneous to those proposed here, such as Giant Food and Safeway. Before I became a staff member at UFCW Local 400, I was an employee of Giant Food. Fair scheduling allowed me to earn my degree without having to stress over the expectation of being an “on call worker” in an industry that should not be of such nature. My mom, a 39-year Giant employee, was able to raise me as a single mom - she could arrange childcare, doctor’s appointments, and rides to work because of the predictable nature of her schedule.

Being a part of a company who has implemented fair scheduling protects workers from retaliation if they cannot make a last-minute shift. I have heard from numerous retail workers who have talked about having to cancel appointments or miss their children’s events because they were called into work last minute and were too afraid to say no, fearing their hours would be cut in retaliation the next week. No employer should have the power over employees that the simple act of missing a phone call during off times or declining a shift could result in a loss of hours and income. Companies who have fair scheduling in place with employees we represent are still profitable and have a flexible workforce. They can schedule employees when they need them, call workers in if things are busy, send workers home if it’s slow, and create schedules based on peak and valley business. They were still able to plan accordingly to business needs. This bill creates a sustainable practice of scheduling that allows workers the freedom to plan and schedule work around their lives.

On behalf of our members and all Marylanders, **we urge a favorable report from this committee on HB 349, The Maryland Fair Scheduling Act.**