



Testimony on HB274/SB387
Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times
Position: Favorable with Amendment¹

To Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee;
To Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Antonia Brooks and I am a Physical Medicine Rehabilitation Technician in a Level 2 Intensive Care Unit at a hospital in Maryland. I'm a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the largest healthcare workers union in the nation. We represent over 10,000 members in Maryland/DC. Our union urges a **favorable** report, with an **amendment**, on HB274/SB387: Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times.

In my experience working in the Emergency Department, there is always an overflow of patients with not enough workers to care for them on time. This was a problem before COVID19 but is even worse now. Hospital management is unable to retain workers because wages are not high enough and healthcare workers are burning out. We are in dire need of safe staffing ratios – not only of doctors and nurses but of clinical techs, and service workers too. I have seen with my own eyes patient health deteriorate because of long Emergency Department wait times. We give high quality healthcare, but we can't be everywhere at once. Another problem that is slowing down patient care is the machinery we use like Xrays and MRIs break and there isn't anyone to fix them quickly.

Something else that is really unfair to patients is hospitals will admit patients with private, "better" insurance while low-income patients on Medicare/Medicaid and patients who don't have insurance at all get bumped to the back of the line. That is immoral and leads to bigger health disparities between patients based on income. Everyone deserves access to timely, high-quality care regardless of income or health insurance status.

Maryland has the longest hospital wait times in the United States. Healthcare workers in short-staffed hospitals are overburdened, and patients deserve to be treated in a timely manner. We healthcare workers are the experts on what is happening inside our Emergency Departments and the solutions we need, so we urge an amendment that will ensure two healthcare workers have seats on the Task Force. Please vote yes on this bill and proposed amendment.

Sincerely, Antonia Brooks, annlize74@hotmail.com

¹Requested Amendment to Line 19: One Registered Nurse employed in an Emergency Department who is a member of an employee organization that is the exclusive bargaining representative of health care workers; and One Service Employee employed in an Emergency Department who is a member of an employee organization that is the exclusive bargaining representative of health care workers.