

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children, Youth,
and Families

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake
and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3131 • 301-858-3131
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB197 FOUR DAY WORK WEEK

SB197 Is an innovative proposal to address the myriad workplace issues facing our state. We all regularly hear from employers who are challenged finding employees. The Great Resignation has had a dramatic impact on the workplace, and the nature of work is undergoing a fundamental shift. We also hear from employees who are struggling to balance the demands of work and home life. We hear about the mental health challenges facing our constituents - that certainly existed before COVID, but have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Justice Brandeis is recognized for saying that the states are the laboratories of democracy and this bill is an attempt to bring to life that adage. This is a pilot program. It provides a carrot to business and incentivizes them to experiment with their workplace culture by making a change in hours – from a traditional 5 day 40 hour work week to a 32 hour 4 day work week.

The nonprofit 4 Day Week Global Foundation conducted a major study of 33 companies around the world, including some in the U.S. They studied a 6-month long pilot program for the 4-day work week with employees working no more than 32 hours during the week. The pilot study reported on the outcomes for the participating companies. Reduced hours were followed by reduced burnout, increased productivity, increased job satisfaction, improved physical and mental health, better sleep at night, and even reduced conflict in personal relationships.² All of these benefits on reduced work hours were incurred without reducing pay. 97% of the participating employees wanted to continue with the 4-day work week after the pilot was over.² A majority of the participating employers were committed to continuing the program as well. There were also savings in energy costs, a positive impact on the environment.

A survey of 2,001 employees across the nation, working in a variety of industries, found that about half of all working Americans are experiencing burnout to some extent.¹ When asked to rank ways to ease their burnout, based on helpfulness, respondents shared that paid time off and flexible scheduling were the most helpful ways employers could address employee burnout.² Researchers concluded that what American workers need is more time. Time to de-stress, care for their families, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

SB197 establishes a Four-Day Workweek Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Labor (DOL) and allows them some flexibility about how, exactly, to craft the program. It would require companies to collect information and share data with DOL.

We believe this is a win-win for employers and employees and provide an incentive for companies to experiment with the proposal, study it and see if it works. If it does, there's not really a need to continue it because the marketplace will respond accordingly. And if it doesn't, then that's important to learn too.

Thank you for your consideration and I ask for your support of SB 197.

¹https://www.aflac.com/docs/awr/pdf/2021-overview/2021_aflac_workforces_report_executivesummary.pdf

²<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b956cbe7bf6f2efd86b04e/t/6387a0e53881be1284cb046e/1669832945858/The+Four+Day+Week-+Assessing+Global+Trials+of+Reduced+Work+Time+with+No+Reduction+in+Pay+%E2%80%93+A+%E2%80%93+30112022.pdf>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/dy7mdw/4-day-work-week-maryland>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/02/the-alarming-long-term-consequences-of-workplace-stress/385397/>