



Testimony on HB274/SB387  
Task Force on Reducing Emergency Department Wait Times  
**Position: Favorable with Amendment<sup>1</sup>**

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 Ricarra Jones and I am the Political Director 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.

Maryland has the longest Emergency Department wait times in the country, and 1199SEIU members have long been sounding the alarm that Maryland's hospitals are in crisis. The current worker to patient ratios in our hospitals are unsustainable. Due to chronic short-staffing, healthcare workers are overworked and underpaid, and patient's health can suffer when they are forced to wait far too long to be treated in the Emergency Department because hospital mismanagement is leading to high employee turnover.

This bill requires a study of best practices in EDs in states that: 1) are similar in population size to Maryland; 2) have at least one city of approximately 500,000 residents; and 3) rank in the top 50% of states or higher in shortest ED wait time. We need the study to examine Emergency Department staffing ratios, triage practices, and bed availability. A task force would be created by the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) to conduct the study. The task force would include state legislators, patient advocates, **emergency care workers**, the Maryland Dept. of Health, and the Maryland Hospital Association. Study results would be reported to the General Assembly by Jan. 2024 and give recommendations for improvements to Maryland's Emergency Department practices to help reduce current wait times.

Passing this bill is a necessary first step towards ending the short staffing crisis in our hospitals, supporting healthcare workers, and improving patient care. 1199SEIU requests an **amendment** to ensure that the Task Force includes two Emergency Department workers – one Registered Nurse and one Service Employee – because workers are the experts on solutions needed to reduce Emergency Department wait times and end the short staffing crisis in our hospitals. RNs and Service employees both have valuable and unique perspectives to offer. We hope your Committee will issue a **favorable** report on this bill. Thank you.

In Unity,  
Ricarra Jones, Political Director  
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<sup>1</sup>Requested 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.

