



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 559
Four-Day Workweek Act of 2024
Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
February 27, 2024 • Appropriations Committee**

What the Bill Does:

HB559 would establish a shortened work week for a small percentage of state workers. With a sponsor amendment, this pilot project would target 20% of the state's workers. They would shift to a 36 workweek with no reduction in pay or benefits.

The sectors and classifications to which the bill would apply will be chosen by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), based on feasibility and ease of implementation, by October 1, 2025. The transition would be implemented over a 3-year time period. In its fourth year, the Department would be required to report to the General Assembly on the effect of the four-day workweek transition and its impact on factors such as vacancy rates, departmental budgets, etc.

Senator Hettleman and I have been working closely with DBM regarding their concerns around the agency's capacity to implement this transition. My understanding is that they would prefer to study this issue before being required to undergo a transition.

Why the Bill is Important:

Prior to 1991, at least two-thirds of state workers in Maryland enjoyed a 35.5 hour workweek.¹ That arrangement had been in place for almost 50 years. Governor William Donald Schaefer, in response to budgetary concerns, lengthened the work week to 40 hours with an executive order.

A growing body of evidence is showing that work time reduction is a win-win-win for everyone: good for employees, good for employers, and good for society. The benefits for workers are unsurprising: employees frequently **report being happier and less stressed at work**, and studies show **positive effects on family life, mental health, job satisfaction, and physical fitness**. There are also important benefits for society: reducing the workweek correlates with **lower levels of energy**

¹ [Md. workweek is decades old Schedule is among the shortest in U.S.](#), The Baltimore Sun.

consumption and lowering carbon emissions at a national level, improvements in **gender equity**, and broad benefits for **mental health**.²

But, perhaps most importantly, the benefits for employers cannot be understated. Businesses that offer four-day work weeks find that it comes with a broad set of benefits, including **improving their ability to attract and retain talent, reducing employee sickness statistics, and improving efficiency and reducing cost**.³ One study found that over two-thirds of employers reported not only an increase in productivity, but also an improvement in the quality of work produced. After a year-long trial conducted by 4 Day Global, out of 41 companies, **no organization expressed a desire to return to five days**.⁴

Meanwhile, the State of Maryland finds itself in the midst of a vacancy crisis. With over 39,000 employees across 64 executive branch agencies, excluding higher education, the number of unfilled openings was between 6,000 and 7,000 at the start of the year.⁵ The state's vacancy rate in public safety, health and human services agencies jumped from 12.7% in 2018 to 13.8% in 2022, according to an [analysis by the Department of Legislative Services](#). Further, data shows that the state is losing employees just as quickly as it is hiring them.

The State of Maryland must compete for workers, not only with the private sector, but also with state positions in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and the federal government. Offering a four-day, or 36-hour, workweek as part of its employee package of benefits would help the State keep pace with an increasingly competitive job market, by strengthening its ability to attract and retain talent, improving efficiency and productivity within the workforce, and reducing taxpayer cost.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably:

Growing vacancies mean that the state is unable to provide many essential services and resources to Maryland taxpayers across the state. An overburdened workforce with reduced capacity, where many state workers are forced to work overtime to meet the needs of communities across Maryland, is not a sustainable solution.

HB559 offers a creative and innovative strategy for addressing the state vacancy crisis. But it is also a win-win-win for everyone: for state agencies, state workers, and all Marylanders. **I urge a favorable report.**

² WorkFour: Four-day Workweek Primer (Maryland), 4 Day Week Global.

[Are Shorter Work Hours Good for the Environment?](#) Rosnick, David and Mark Reissnot, 2006.

³ [Four Better or Four Worse?](#) Henley Business School, University of Reading.

⁴ [The 4 day week: 12 months on – with new US and Canadian research](#), 4 Day Week Global.

⁵ [Effort to reduce vacant state government positions falling short of Moore's promise](#). Maryland Matters.