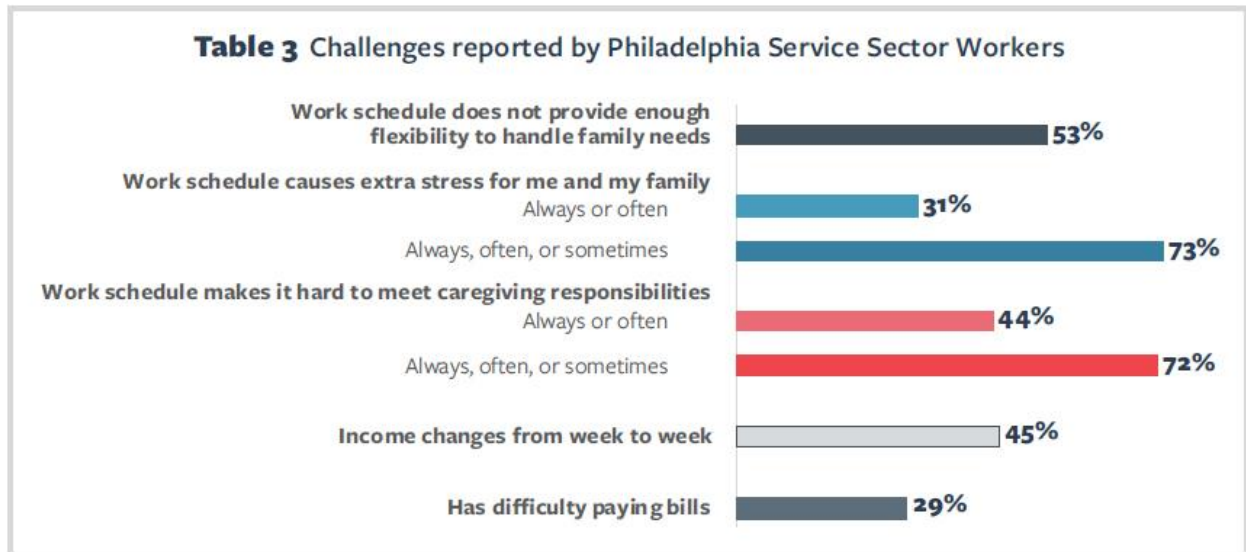**TESTIMONY: Helen Gym**
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
March 12, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Helen Gym, and I am a former At-Large member of the Philadelphia City Council and the sponsor of our city's ordinance on predictable scheduling which passed in 2018.

Philadelphia is the poorest large city in the nation, with a poverty level of nearly 25% among residents and 40% among our children. When we worked with researchers through the Shift Project, one of the areas we identified as contributing to poverty was unstable scheduling practices rampant in Philadelphia's low wage hourly sector.

Table 3 Challenges reported by Philadelphia Service Sector Workers

Challenge	Percentage
Work schedule does not provide enough flexibility to handle family needs	53%
Work schedule causes extra stress for me and my family — Always or often	31%
Work schedule causes extra stress for me and my family — Always, often, or sometimes	73%
Work schedule makes it hard to meet caregiving responsibilities — Always or often	44%
Work schedule makes it hard to meet caregiving responsibilities — Always, often, or sometimes	72%
Income changes from week to week	45%
Has difficulty paying bills	29%

Source: SHIFT survey of 687 service sector workers

Contrary to what some may think, predictable scheduling is about what happens to people when they are NOT working for their employer. Our studies showed that prior to the bill's passage a vast majority of employers required their workers to keep schedules "open and available".

a. More than 80% of hourly workers did not have regular daytime work schedules. The average worker stated that there was a 14 hour difference per week within a single month of employment. Nearly half could not predict their weekly income.

b. Parents and caretakers testified about missing medical and prenatal appointments. Teachers and college counselors testified about how unstable work schedules contributed to absenteeism and drop-out rates. Working families spoke about the challenges of juggling two or more jobs when none had regular schedules.

c. Canceled shifts meant they struggled to pay rent or cover childcare costs and grocery bills.

d. Our intent was to protect people from abusive practices that contributed to instability and perpetuate poverty.

I crafted Philadelphia's predictable scheduling ordinance through months of roundtables and feedback sessions with our labor, business, and civic communities. Our law reflected lessons learned in other jurisdictions and addressed challenges raised by businesses.

Here were our core components:

1. We applied the law to large businesses, including franchises, which had the workforce management resources and technological capacity to handle large scale scheduling and documentation. Software companies provide products that adapt to meet any scheduling compliance needs. Additionally, large corporations already operated under similar predictable scheduling laws in New York City and elsewhere.

2. We addressed challenges that had arisen in other cities to allow for ease of compliance, flexibility in business operations, and to prevent abuse. Examples included electronic documentation, clear exemptions, and an ongoing municipal business-labor roundtable.

3. We staged the planned rollout of our Fair Workweek ordinance over three years. We delayed the imposition of penalties and invested in education and outreach.

Today, predictable scheduling laws around the nation protect millions of working Americans and are now a workplace standard. We have shown that what's good for workers can also be good for businesses, ending high staff turnover, stabilizing work and home life, and establishing commonsense practices that define healthy business environments. I urge a favorable report on this bill and am available for any questions.

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