

SB 994 - Maryland Predictable Scheduling Act

SUPPORT

March 11, 2024

To: The Honorable Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

From: Kayla Mock, Political & Legislative Director
United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Dear Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, who have worked the frontlines and have been essential employees in grocery, retail, food distribution, law enforcement, and healthcare. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers.

We strongly support SB 994, the Maryland Predictable Scheduling Act, and urge this committee to vote it favorably.

In most of the industries United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 400 (UFCW Local 400) represents, we see the importance of fair scheduling. Retail schedules are often unpredictable, posted with late notice, and often leave workers stressed, vulnerable, and feeling as though they are constantly “on call”, even though the nature of their work is not. It can be exhausting and expensive.

The burden of home care and childcare often falls to women, meaning unpredictable schedules and changes disproportionately affects them. The National Women’s Law Center found, “unfair work schedules make it difficult for women to access healthcare for themselves and their loved ones, noting that medical appointments often need to be made well in advance, an impossibility when workers do not know their schedules until days before their shifts.”

Fair scheduling fosters healthy practices allowing time for life planning, sleep, commuting, caring for children, a household, or oneself. Fair scheduling also relieves stress, which promotes better mental health practices through work life balance. Workers with fair scheduling employers often feel more secure, cared for, and happier at work and home.

Fair scheduling is also beneficial for businesses. Multiple studies find that businesses who implement predictable scheduling have a decrease in worker turnover, have simpler time tracking on payroll, and increase their worker productivity. Harvard Kennedy’s School’s Shift Project found that fair scheduling, “increased worker happiness and sleep quality, reduced material hardship, and allowed workers to schedule and pay for medical care.”

It is simple – workers who know their schedules and therefore can plan their lives are more productive at work.

UFCW Local 400 is proud to have several collective bargaining agreements that implement fair scheduling standards, some homogeneous to those proposed here, such as Giant Food and Safeway. Employees at these companies have access to their schedules in advance, have protections from “clopening” shifts (a practice where an employee works closing hours and then turns around and works opening hours), and has notice of last-minute shift changes or additions. Companies who have fair scheduling in place with employees we represent are still profitable and have a flexible workforce. They can

Page 2

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schedule employees when they need them, call workers in if things are busy, send workers home if it's slow, and create schedules based on peak and valley business. They were still able to plan accordingly to business needs.

Lastly, unpredictable scheduling impacts people when they are not even at work.

Over the years, I have heard from numerous retail workers who have talked about having to cancel appointments or miss their children's events because they were called into work last minute and were too afraid to say no, fearing their hours would be cut in retaliation the next week. Employees should be able to plan and live their lives without constantly having to be concerned about their schedule changing at the last minute without their input.

Without unpredictable scheduling, workers end up in jobs that don't pay enough to live on and aren't predictable enough to schedule around.

For these reasons and more, **we urge a favorable report from this committee on SB 994, The Maryland Predictable Scheduling Act.**