



Local 5197

AFT Healthcare-Maryland
7127 Rutherford Road
Baltimore, MD 21244

Written Testimony Submitted for the Record

Committee: Appropriations
Bill: House Bill 520

Date: January 31, 2025
Position - Support

Good afternoon Chairman and members of the Appropriations Committee

I am Rosemary Wertz, Field Coordinator for AFT Healthcare-Maryland, the exclusive bargaining representative for Healthcare Professionals in Maryland State government. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support HB 520 and thank you to the sponsors. Our bargaining unit includes Registered Nurses, Physicians, Therapists and Counselors. We negotiated a 36-hour workweek program for our Registered Nurses in 24/7 facilities in 2019 and came here to the legislature to have the law amended to allow full time salary and benefits for members of the program. Currently we have members working 3 twelve hour shifts and 4 ten hour shifts. We have been attempting to expand shift options for healthcare professionals in state government for many years to address recruitment and retention.

We have only a handful of positions in our bargaining unit designated as part time, and those are limited to school nurses and few at 80%. House Bill 520 will expand part time permanent positions in state government and therefore, expand shift options available to members of our bargaining unit. Healthcare professionals in private industry have many shift options. The state must expand the tools used for recruitment to become competitive in the labor market for healthcare professionals. That includes compressed workweek programs and expanding part time employment. Many of our healthcare professionals work a second job. This bill will expand the pool of potential candidates to those who want to support their communities and still make a good living. The state can be a secondary employer for healthcare professionals. State government can offer benefits that, even at pro-rated levels, would be an attraction to healthcare professional job seekers. Especially since the healthcare benefits offered to healthcare professionals in private industry are not great.

House Bill 520 would also positively impact retention of our members. Our bargaining unit is mostly female. We lose members because they do not want to work full time after starting their families. We lose members because their schedules conflict with their family obligations regularly. This bill will establish a list of positions eligible to be filled by 2 part time employees. This is a perfect arrangement for 2 new mom RNs who work in a local health department clinic, or simply 2 busy moms or dads who want to spend more time with family.

Recruitment and retention of employees is becoming more and more about work/life balance. AFT Healthcare-Maryland supports HB 520 and urges a favorable vote from this committee.

Respectfully submitted,
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