



TESTIMONY FOR HB0188 Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2026

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Charkoudian

Committee: Economic Matters

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0188 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Maryland has experienced a sharp increase in unemployed workers due to the Trump administration's war on Federal government workers. The fact that so many workers with similar skills were unemployed so suddenly meant that in addition to having to look for new jobs, the market was tight. Collecting unemployment pay meant the difference between putting food on the table and going hungry, or paying their rent/mortgage or losing their home.

Maryland, however, has been slow to update the amount that an individual can receive as well as the way the unemployment fund is replenished. Because Maryland has not really updated our unemployment regulations since 2010, the maximum amount an individual would receive is much lower than what is required in this economy. Additionally, all of those people drawing on unemployment is putting a strain on the fund.

This bill, if enacted, would gradually increase the maximum weekly benefit until 2029 when it will be set to 40% of the average weekly wage and the minimum weekly benefit to 15% of the average weekly wage. Maryland would be the 27th state to index their unemployment benefits. Additionally, the taxable wage base will be increased gradually until 2029 when it will be indexed to 16% of the average annual wage. Maryland's taxable wage base was set at \$8,500 in 1992 and has not been updated since.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.