



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Testimony in Support of HB 527 Labor and Employment – Earned Sick Leave

House Economic Matters Committee
February 18th, 2014

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports HB 527, which allows all workers to earn a limited number of paid sick days. HB 527 will allow workers to earn one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 7 days of paid sick leave per year if someone is working full-time.

HB 527 provides economic stability for working Marylanders, and in particular those living in or near poverty. Nearly 800,000 Marylanders – four in ten private sector workers – do not have the ability to earn paid sick leave.^{i ii} As Maryland strives to recover from the Great Recession, too many families have to worry about losing their jobs or sacrificing needed income if they or someone in their family becomes ill. Everyone gets sick, and we need to ensure that families are able to recover from illness without risking their economic stability at a time they can least afford it.

Economic stability provides food stability. Although Maryland is the richest state in the Nation, 16.2 percent of Maryland households had difficulty affording enough food to feed their family in 2012.^{iii,iv} From December of 2012 to December of 2013, every county in Maryland saw an increase in enrollment in the Food Supplement Program (FSP, known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and formerly known as Food Stamps). At the same time, the USDA estimates that food costs will rise between 2.5-3.5% in 2014.^v In addition, Hunger is a symptom of poverty and nearly 14% of the children in our state live below the poverty line^{vi}.

In these tough economic times, having a stable income can be the difference between putting food on the table or families having to skip a meal. HB 527 ensures that families will not have to worry losing income –or their employment – if someone becomes ill, and consequently being forced to make hard decisions about how much food they can afford to buy on already stretched budgets.

In essence, workers won't be forced to choose between the families that they love and the jobs that they need because of an illness that they can't avoid.

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports HB 527 as it creates food security by way of economic stability for all Marylanders, and in particular those working while living in or near poverty. **Maryland Hunger Solutions appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 527.**

We urge a favorable report for this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Wilson, Director
Maryland Hunger Solutions

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a state-wide organization working to end hunger, promote nutrition, and improve well-being for Marylanders in need through education, advocacy, outreach and collaboration. Maryland Hunger Solutions focuses on improving and increasing participation in federal nutrition programs to ensure that everyone has access to adequate healthy food every day.

ⁱ Center for American Progress. (2013). *Fact Sheet: Paid Sick Days*.

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/news/2012/08/16/12031/fact-sheet-paid-sick-days/>

ⁱⁱ Department of Business and Economic Development. (2012). *Employment Distribution By Industry*.

<http://www.choosemaryland.org/factsstats/Pages/ByIndustry.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Census Bureau. (September 2012). *American Community Survey*. Washington, DC.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/income.html>

^{iv} Food Research and Action Center. (February 2013). *Food Hardship in America 2012*.

http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2012.pdf

^v United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2014, January 24). *Food Consumer Price Index and Food Price Outlook and Expenditures*. Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook.aspx>

^{vi} <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#MD/2/0>