



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 230 - 2017:
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act**

TO: Hon. Thomas Middleton, Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Zoe Ziliak Michel, Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy

My name is Zoe Ziliak Michel. I am a resident of Silver Spring and a policy analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). CLASP is a national organization that works to improve the lives of low income people by developing and advocating for federal, state, and local policies that strengthen families and create pathways to education and work. CLASP strongly supports SB 230, the Healthy Working Families Act, which will help Marylanders currently living in poverty and bring financial benefits to Maryland businesses.

More than 750,000 Maryland workers are currently unable to earn paid sick days. Low-wage workers are particularly hard hit: 80 percent do not have access to sick days. SB 230 would make it possible for many of these workers to take the time they need to recover from illness, care for sick loved ones, or deal with the effects of sexual or physical abuse.

SB 230's inclusivity makes it the right choice to help low-income Marylanders. The bill ensures that workers at even the smallest businesses will be able to earn job-protected sick days, and those at employers with at least 15 employees will earn *paid* days. Under SB 230, part-time workers will be able to earn sick days at the same rate as full-time workers—1 hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked. This is a vital protection for the nearly 100,000 Maryland workers who are involuntarily part-time, including those who may work multiple part-time jobs.

The benefits of earned sick days go beyond social justice. The health and safety implications of this policy are profound. Research shows that workers who do not have sick days are more likely to come to work when they are sick or to send sick children to school; as a result, more people become infected with contagious diseases like influenza or norovirus infections. This poses a serious public health threat. Further, when workers don't have time away from their jobs to recover, they are much more likely to get injured on the job.

Businesses also win when workers have earned sick days. Employees who are forced to work while sick are less productive and may make valuable customers ill. When workers lose their jobs because they take time off to recover from illness, employers bear the expensive costs of turnover. Unsafe workplaces are also more costly to employers, who must contend with increased healthcare costs, workers' compensation costs, and lost productivity. Finally, workers are consumers, too. When workers lose wages or their jobs because they are ill, they have less money to spend in their communities. Local businesses feel the effects of reduced demand, and the economy suffers. Our colleagues at the Institute for Women's Policy Research have found that earned sick days would yield benefits of \$195 million for Maryland employers; such significant savings help to account for the growing number of employers in Maryland and nationwide who support earned sick days laws.¹



In light of these and many other compelling reasons to support earned sick days legislation, we encourage Maryland to join the seven states and dozens of cities and counties around the nation that have passed earned paid sick days laws. CLASP respectfully urges a favorable report on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Zoe Ziliak Michel, Ph.D.
Policy Analyst
CLASP

¹ For a list of Maryland businesses that support earned sick days, visit <http://betterwbb.org/business-support-for-statelocal-earned-sick-days-proposals-and-laws/#MD>