



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 40: Maryland Healthy Working Families Act

TO: Hon. Thomas Middleton, Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Sara Moulton and Craig Beyler, Co-Chairs, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

DATE: February 3, 2015

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland represents 24 congregations from across the state, approximately 4,700 people of faith who understand that “love is the doctrine of this church, and service its prayer.” Our congregations include people who are working for sick leave benefits for all workers. Our ministers provide pastoral care to minimum wage workers trying to better themselves and care for families. We do service to those who live in and near poverty, and we profess the worth and dignity of every individual.

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) supports SB 40, Maryland Healthy Working Families Act.

The first principle of Unitarian Universalism is to affirm the worth and dignity of all persons, but four in ten private-sector workers – and more than 720,000 Marylanders – cannot earn paid sick days to care for their own health or the health of their family members. The lack of earned paid sick days feeds the cycle of poverty, a very real human reality that needs to be addressed.

A lack of paid sick days exacts its heaviest toll on low-income workers; missing work due to illness can mean being unable to pay for basic necessities, including the health care services that can get them back to work. Because of the high cost of missing work, many low-wage workers will expose their coworkers and the public to illness when sick, or send their children to school sick. Of great concern for public health and contagion prevention, less than one-quarter of food preparation and serving workers have access to paid sick days. This is a public health issue that affects all Marylanders. Paid sick days and job protection are likewise essential for the 25% of women who need time at some point in their lives to seek assistance due to domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault.

When people come to work sick, they risk exposing their coworkers to the same illness, creating lost productivity overall. Delayed medical care often leads to prolonged illness and costly emergency room visits. Some may be forced to rely on government assistance programs like Medicaid and food stamps.

SB40, Maryland Healthy Working Families Act will provide the dignity and protections to Maryland families to which all people are entitled. This bill will allow low-wage workers job protection and the ability to care for their families and themselves, and minimize the spread of illness in the population at large. Maryland must take the issue to hand and provide an avenue for health, dignity, and equity for its citizens, rich and poor.

Sara Moulton and Craig Beyler, Co-Chairs

UULM-MD Task Force For Economic Justice