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United for Quality Care

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Alex Paterakos-Figueroa, Government Relations

SEIU Healthcare Illinois

HB 5574 HA1

Position: SUPPORT

Sponsor: Representative Delia Ramirez

SEIU Healthcare is a union of healthcare, child care, home care and nursing home workers. Uniting more than 91,000 workers who provide vital care to our states' children, seniors, patients and people with disabilities, we are committed to quality care and quality jobs for home care, hospital, nursing home and child care workers.

Our union is driven by our mission for social and economic justice for our communities, and an integral component of achieving that, in our view, is housing security.

Our union therefore strongly supports the passage of HB 5574 HA1 as a critical measure to stem the tide of housing instability that will dramatically overwhelm working families across our state if no action is taken.

For many Illinois workers and their families, years of stagnant wages coupled with an ever-rising cost of living have resulted in the constant uprooting and displacement of low-income families, even before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know this plays out in similar, though not identical ways in all parts of our state, from communities in Chicago to small towns and rural areas. We know the risks these dynamics pose as our state works to recover from effects of the pandemic are great.

As some of the state's lowest wage earners, our members understand what housing instability means. HUD defines 'cost burdened' families as those "who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing" and "may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care." Severe rent burden is defined as paying more than 50 percent of one's income on rent." Our members understand these concepts because many of them live it.

While most of our members have been classified as essential workers during the stay at home orders and are therefore mostly not part of the historic level of unemployment in our state, many have still encountered job disruption and income loss. Hospitals have furloughed workers as COVID-related activity has changed hospitals' operations. We have observed even more job loss where hospital workers do not have a collective bargaining agreement. Child care in its entirety faced disruption as providers grappled with whether or not they could reopen as emergency providers for the children of essential workers with lower enrollment and staffing. And members across health care settings who have underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk have had to leave work to protect themselves, facing uncertainty and income loss as a result. Tragically, some risk their lives by continuing to work for fear of losing their homes.



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As providers of essential community services, our members witness the detrimental effects of housing instability. For example, home child care providers see impacts if families with children in their neighborhood cannot stay in their homes. Children lose stable relationships with caregivers and other children; their development may be affected. The provider loses long-running relationships with families whose children she cares for – or even the opportunity to form such relationships – and may struggle to operate as a result. The perspectives of home care workers who provide services to seniors and people with disabilities are similar.

For these families living paycheck to paycheck, it is the lack of certainty over how to cover unpaid rent and mortgage payments once the moratorium on evictions comes to a sudden end that is causing great stress. As a result, some families are making the difficult decision over what necessities to cut in order to save money for payments.

If enacted into law, HB 5574 HA1 will bring much needed stability to Illinois families so they can plan and budget accordingly. Having sensible transition policy in place when the Governor's state of emergency declaration comes to an end is a preventative measure that will mitigate much hardship and disruption to the lives of thousands of people across the state.

We strongly urge all members of the General Assembly to vote affirmatively for HB 5574 HA1.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SEIU Healthcare Illinois