

JOTF advocates for legislation and budget proposals that improve the economic opportunities of Maryland's low-skill, low-income workers and their families. Our advocacy work stems from a recognition that a healthy Maryland economy requires public policies that meet the workforce needs of employers and promote fair and equitable access to economic opportunities for low-income Marylanders.

During the 2018 state legislative session, JOTF will support the following legislative and budget initiatives that promote *ACCESS* to education, training and employment advancement opportunities for low-wage, low-skill workers and job-seekers, the successful reentry of workers with a criminal record, workplace benefits and supports, and best-practice hiring policies:

## **VETO OVERRIDES**

### **HB 1 - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act - Earned Sick Days**

Everyone gets sick and everyone deserves time to recover without risking their economic stability, yet 40 percent of American workers are unable to earn paid sick days. Amongst low-wage workers, the people who can least afford to take unpaid time off when sick, nearly 80 percent lack access to this basic benefit. In Maryland, more than 700,000 of our neighbors are forced to make impossible choices: go to work sick, send an ill child to school or daycare, or stay home and sacrifice much-needed income or, worse, risk job loss.

During the 2017 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act (HB1) which would allow workers to earn one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of five days (40 hours) per year for full-time workers. At the conclusion of the legislative session, Governor Hogan vetoed House Bill 1.

JOTF was successful in securing the votes necessary to override the veto during the first week of the 2018 legislative session and will aggressively pursue monitoring and oversight to ensure the state moves swiftly to develop and implement the appropriate regulations that ensure effective implementation.

### **SB 543/HB 694- Maryland Fair Access to Education Act of 2017**

Each year approximately 15,000 inmates return from prison to communities across Maryland. Their criminal record and low education levels are enormous barriers to mainstream employment. By adopting policies that will promote the long-term employment of former inmates, we can help ensure that these Marylanders find legitimate work, contribute to the economy, and turn their lives around.

JOTF has long supported and led efforts to eliminate the arrest/conviction question from initial job applications that requires prospective employees to check a box indicating that they have been arrested or convicted of a crime. Given the strong correlation between education and income, JOTF also understands the importance of eliminating any barriers related to education for individuals with a criminal background. During the 2017 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB 543/HB 694 - Maryland Fair Access to Education Act of 2017 with veto proof majorities. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of the 2017 legislative session, Governor Hogan vetoed the legislation. A month later, Louisiana adopted a similar law making it the first state in the nation with this type of policy.

JOTF was successful in securing the votes necessary to override the veto and will aggressively pursue monitoring and oversight to ensure the arrest/conviction question is officially removed from initial college applications.

## **JOTF 2018 POLICY PRIORITIES**

### **HB 1383 - The Maryland REDEEM (Record Expungement Designed to Enhance Employment) Act of 2018**

JOTF is working with partners to expand expungement eligibility, so that individuals with a criminal record have a fair chance at employment. JOTF will focus its efforts on advancing the Maryland REDEEM Act of 2018, a comprehensive bill that would:

- Automatically expunge non-convictions;
- Provide clarification on the expungement eligibility of arrest warrants; and
- Expand expungement for nonviolent misdemeanors and felonies

### **HB 1554 - Child Support, The Payment Incentive Program (PIP) Expansion Act of 2018**

JOTF will support HB 1554 as it seeks to restructure the Child Support Payment Incentive Program (PIP) to provide for greater program awareness and participation, a 6-month grace period for participants who become unemployed, and alternative payment schedules for non-traditional workers.

### **SB 842/HB 781 - Education Excellence Award Eligibility**

The Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant (GAG) is a need-based grant that provides up to 100% of tuition and fees for a Maryland community college or a four-year university. HB 781/SB 842 will restructure the eligibility requirements of the GAG to allow individuals with their Maryland High School Diploma (otherwise known as a passing GED score) to be eligible to apply and receive funding.

### **SB 945/HB 656 - Access to Affordable Automobile Insurance**

JOTF will support SB 945/HB 656 as it seeks to remove non-driving factors, such as educational attainment and occupation, in setting auto insurance premiums. JOTF will also actively support efforts that seek to establish a low-cost car insurance state pilot program.

### **Bail Reform**

The “money bail” system creates a lasting impact on working families. Low-income Marylanders are often held in jail due to their inability to pay bail, not because of being an actual threat to the community. JOTF will aggressively defend the *full implementation* of the current court rule, which includes the use of pre-trial services as an alternative to incarceration. We will support efforts seeking budget language to fund various pre-trial service options that are based on community needs to ensure that Marylanders are given the opportunity to avoid incarceration, and ultimately, avoid missing vital days at work.

### **Debtor’s Prisons - Access to Justice**

The criminalization of poverty allows for mounting fees to trap the poor in the criminal justice system. This vicious cycle of fees, which go unpaid due to an inability to pay, lead to incarceration, disrupting employment and limiting employment opportunities. JOTF will support legislation that limits wage garnishment, the use of body attachments to collect debt, and the elimination of fees related to incarceration, pre-trial services, and other fees related to the criminal justice system.

### **State Budget Monitoring**

During the 2018 session, JOTF will actively monitor the state budget, focusing specifically on ensuring that the State adequately invests in pre-trial services, including workforce development and access to adult education, in order to properly support individuals involved in the criminal justice system, reduce recidivism, and to give Marylanders the opportunity to actively participate in the city’s workforce.

JOTF will also monitor Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Program and Adult and Correctional Education (including access and affordability of GED Testing), both of which are included in the DLLR budget.