

September 15, 2020

Baltimore Hospitality Workers Face a Jobs Crisis and Black Women are the Most Impacted

Executive Summary

- Hospitality workers in Baltimore City are facing an unprecedented jobs crisis. In May, leisure and hospitality employment was down 50% from last year, potentially displacing approximately 15,500 workers.
- Baltimore hotel, event center and hospitality workers face mass layoffs due to the pandemic. UNITE HERE Local 7 membership records show job losses of approximately 1,583 union-represented employees at the Hilton Baltimore, Hyatt Regency, Marriott Waterfront, Radisson, Crown Plaza, Camden Yards, Baltimore Convention Center, Royal Farms Arena and the Pimlico Race Course.
- Black women are the largest group impacted by layoffs at the Hilton Baltimore, the site of the city's largest hotel mass layoff, and the Marriott Waterfront. The laid off workers at the Hilton Baltimore are 69% Black, 7% Asian, 6% Latinx and 58% women.
- Mayor Jack Young and members of the City Council should move quickly to pass and sign into law Council Bills 20-0544 and 20-0543 which would protect hospitality workers' recall rights as the industry recovers and workplaces reopen. Without this action, thousands of Baltimore workers risk dire economic uncertainty.

Hospitality Workers in Baltimore Are Facing an Unemployment Crisis

In Baltimore City, overall employment has dropped by approximately 12% compared to 2019 levels since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The impact on the city's hospitality industry has been even more extreme. At the worst point of the crisis, employment in the leisure and hospitality industry was down by 50%, from approximately 31,200 employees in May 2019 to 15,700 in May 2020. Since then, recovery has been slow. Leisure and hospitality employment rose to approximately 16,300 in June (down 47% from June 2019) and preliminary data shows a rise to 18,400 in July (down 40% from July 2019).

Year-over-Year (YoY) Change in Employment in Baltimore City, 2019-2020



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Widespread Job Loss in Hotels, Event Centers, and Hospitality Workplaces

Since the start of the pandemic in March, hotel, event center and hospitality workers in Baltimore City have faced mass layoffs.¹ UNITE HERE Local 7 membership records show job losses of approximately 1,583 union-represented employees at Baltimore City hotels, Camden Yards, the Baltimore Convention Center, Royal Farms Arena and the Pimlico Race Course. Job losses include approximately 332 workers at the Hilton Baltimore, 150 at the Hyatt Regency, 118 at the Marriott Waterfront, and 53 at the Radisson and Crown Plaza hotels. At Camden Yards, approximately 800 concessions workers employed by contractor Delaware North would normally be working during this baseball season. Approximately 130 concessions workers at the Baltimore Convention Center, Royal Farms Arena, and Pimlico Race Course are also out of work.

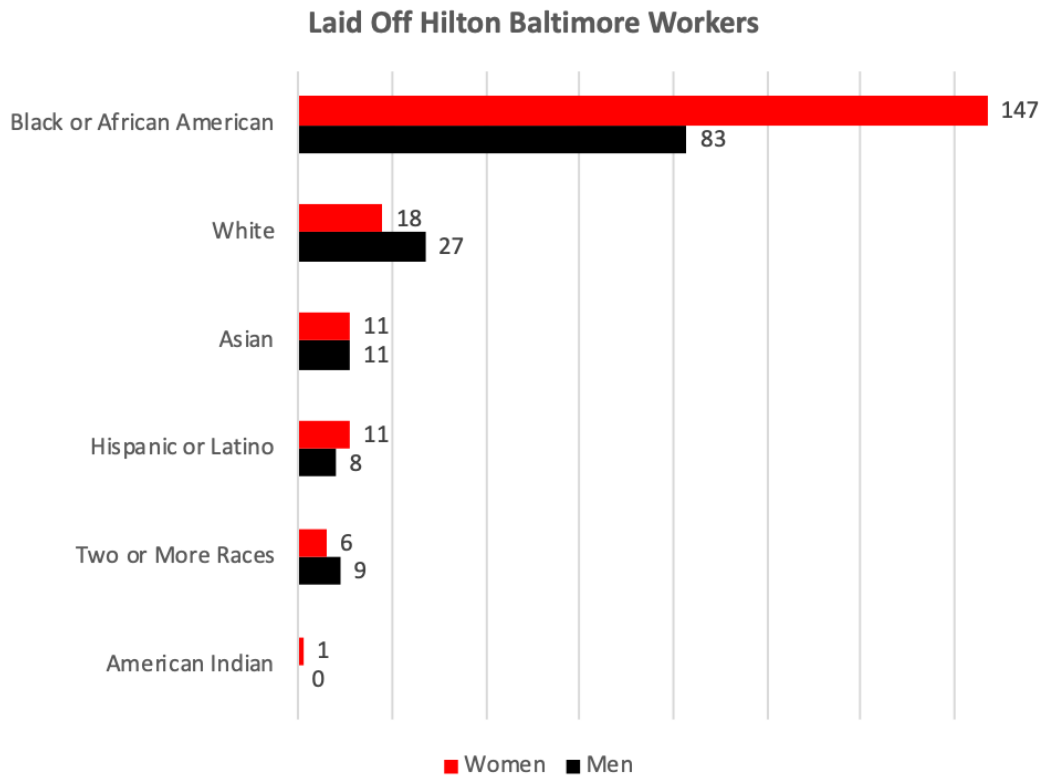
Job Loss Among Union Represented Employees at Baltimore City Hospitality Workplaces

Hospitality Workplace	Working Pre-Pandemic	Working Currently
Camden Yards Concessions	800	0, -100%
Hilton Baltimore	332	0, -100%
Hyatt Regency Baltimore	170	20, -88%
Marriott Waterfront	118	0, -100%
Radisson and Crown Plaza Hotels	65	12, -82%
Baltimore Convention Center Concessions	50	5, -90%
Royal Farms Arena Concessions	50	0, -100%
Pimlico Race Course Concessions	35	0, -100%
Total	1,620	37, -98%

Source: UNITE HERE Local 7 records, as of September 15, 2020

Black Women are the Most Impacted

The Hilton Baltimore, which currently remains closed, is the site of the largest hotel mass layoff in the city. 332 nonmanagerial employees represented by UNITE HERE Local 7 and IUOE Local 37 are currently out of work. Black women are the most impacted group, representing 44% of the laid off nonmanagerial workers. Overall, the laid off workers are 69% Black, 7% Asian, 6% Latinx and 58% women.



Source: UNITE HERE Local 7

At the Marriott Waterfront Hotel, which is partially reopened, UNITE HERE Local 7 represents 118 food and beverage employees who are currently laid off. Among this group, the union estimates that approximately 48% are Black, 20% are Latinx, 14% are Asian and 52% are women. Black women are the most impacted group.

Laid Off Workers Face Dire Economic Uncertainty



STACEY WHYE,
*Housekeeper,
Hilton Baltimore,
11 years*

“We should have the right to be recalled to our jobs when the hotel reopens. It is not our fault that we lost our jobs. We should not have to worry about whether we will be called back or not when we are already worried about our bills, our health, and our families.

To fire us while we are going through the traumatic experience of the pandemic would be cruel.

“When I began working at the hotel in 2009, my two kids were still young. The job allowed me to pay my bills and raise my kids. Now, they are grown and living on their own, and I have a nine-year-old granddaughter. My job let me help them and my granddaughter when they needed it.

“Not only did the job help us financially, our hard work and loyalty benefitted the company for many years. Now, they should have the consideration to respect our right to return.

I should not have to start all over again at a new job.”

WILLIAM MURRAY,
*Banquet Server,
Marriott Waterfront, 19 years*

“For me, being a banquet server has allowed me to be more financially secure and to support my extended family. Before I became a banquet server, I was renting a one-bedroom apartment. With this job I was able to purchase a home in Gwynn Oaks. I support my niece who has health issues and cannot live alone and am able to help both of my parents who are in their 80’s. Having a stable, well-paying job means that when one of my nieces comes up short for things they need, like a laptop for school, I am often the one my family turns to for help, and I am proud to be able to fill that role. I am not alone in this. Good hospitality jobs allow many of my coworkers to be anchors of economic security for their families and communities.

“The COVID 19 crisis has hit our industry hard. We have been laid off since March and, while our hotel is open again in a limited way, we don’t know how long it will be until the large-scale conference events that we depend on for our lively hood return to Baltimore.”

Baltimore's Mayor and City Council Should Act Urgently

Baltimore's city council is currently considering two bills which could protect hospitality workers' economic security, COVID 19 Laid-Off Employees Right of Recall (20-0544) and COVID-19 Employee Retention (20-0543).

COVID 19 Laid-Off Employees Right of Recall (20-0544) would require hotel, event center, and commercial property owners to bring back the same employees they employed before the crisis hit as they reopen or restore operations. Workers would return to their jobs by order of seniority.

COVID-19 Employee Retention (20-0543) would apply in cases when a hotel or event center employer changes ownership. It would require the new owners to retain current workers for a minimum 90-day transition period. This bill would extend similar protections already provided to many food services and building services employees by Baltimore's Displaced Service Workers Protection Ordinance which was enacted in 2017.

Both bills are common sense measures that are urgently needed to create stability in the hospitality workforce. Without this action, thousands of Baltimore workers risk dire economic uncertainty. Baltimore has invested heavily in developing its tourism and hospitality workforce. Hospitality workers have stepped up to be ambassadors for our city and have worked hard for the success of our economy. Now is the time to stand with them.

"One of the lessons of the last downturn is that completely severing the relationship between employers and employees tends to lengthen unemployment. To the extent that companies can implement reduced hours, temporary furloughs, or creative job-sharing and redeployment programs instead of outright layoffs, the entire economy will be better positioned for a faster and stronger recovery."

—McKinsey Global Institute,
4/29/20²

Endnotes

1 <https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/warn.shtml>

2 <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-jobs-monitoring-the-us-impact-on-people-and-places#>