

Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee,

For over 40 years the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) has represented tens of thousands of lawn and landscape professionals across the United States. Tasked with providing plant health services to millions of residential and commercial clients, the core values of our association include advocating on behalf of our members as to the benefits of healthy plants in our landscapes, fostering the highest standards of professionalism, and educating both our members and the public in caring for their landscapes in an environmentally responsible way.

The COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted nearly every aspect of American life. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have died of the disease, millions have suffered the debilitating effects of illness, millions more have lost their jobs or had their jobs change in fundamental ways.

The effects of the pandemic on the American economy cannot be fully appreciated in the moment but no one can disagree that the effects are profoundly negative. Millions of businesses and entire industries have been destroyed, never to return. Suffice it to say that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most important events in American history and the most significant event to occur since the conclusion of the Second World War.

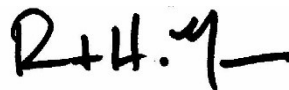
The unifying slogan of this event has been *We're All In This Together*. Unfortunately, Senate Bill 486 turns this slogan on its head.

At first blush, a retroactive payment to employees of \$3.00 per hour worked during the pandemic may seem innocuous and a generous way to reward hard working essential employees. The landscape industry supports fair compensation and takes seriously our responsibility to protect our employees. However, the problem here is that the proposal is cost prohibitive at best and ruinous at worst. A rate of \$3.00 per hour (possibly \$4.50 per hour is applied to overtime) works out to \$120.00 per week. We are now in the 45th week of the pandemic which would bring the total cost per employee to \$5,400 per employee. As mentioned before, those businesses that have managed to survive thus far during the pandemic continue to struggle mightily need to be supported so that they, in turn, can support their employees.

Imposing a \$5,400 (at minimum) per employee retroactive cost on businesses is enormously burdensome on employers. Companies did not have the opportunity to plan for the unanticipated pandemic, no opportunity to budget for such a cost, no opportunity to adjust prices to accommodate for the added costs. Companies do not have bottomless wells of cash available to give away at the insistence of government, and to pretend that they do can only lead to additional bankruptcies at exactly the time when we need good paying jobs the most.

We urge the committee to find ways to bring employers and employees together to meet this pandemic crisis by tabling this bill. Let's sit down and have this discussion that balances public health, the economy and the employer/employee relationship and do it together.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert H. Mann
Director of State & Local Government Relations