



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair  
Finance Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: February 11, 2021

RE: SB486 Labor and Employment – Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers’ Protection Act)

### **The MLLC supports SB486 Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act).**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB486.

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted our society in every imaginable aspect. Its massive economic disruption has raised many challenges for Maryland’s labor force. While some workers can avoid the virus by working from home, this is not a privilege that frontline workers can take advantage of. Since this crisis began, many have been exposed to unsafe work conditions, with the number of safety complaints skyrocketing in recent months.

A 2020 [Brookings study](#) on COVID-19 impacts on essential workers, reported that low-income workers, nonwhite workers, workers with less educational attainment, and workers in service occupations are all less likely to be able to work from home than their peers. In May 2020, only 16% of employees at big-box superstores had access to a mask and for some superstores fewer than 10% had access. Between April 2020 – August 2020, COVID-19 related workplace safety complaints rose over 350%. We want to believe that every Maryland employer will provide the necessary protections for their employees during this emergency and a future one. However, this is can be guaranteed by establishing much-needed requirements. Our essential workers deserve protection and safe working conditions.

SB486 establishes benefits and protections for Maryland’s essential workers during an emergency. This includes employers providing safe and hygienic workspaces, hazard pay, and free personal protective equipment. During these hard times, every essential worker should be valued and accommodated to their basic needs, and the state should take immediate action.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB486.