



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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February 11, 2021

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**Re: Opposition of SB486 - Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an
Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act)**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony opposing SB 486. This bill would require an essential employer to give a written statement regarding hazard pay paid to their essential workers for each pay period; require an essential employer to take actions related to occupational safety and health during an emergency; authorize an essential worker to refuse to fulfill a work responsibilities if the working conditions don't meet the requirements in this bill; prohibits an essential employer from retaliating or taking other adverse action against an essential worker or other worker if they refuse to work;

This bill would put in state law, requirements over and above the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the US Department of Labor. These restrictions would be almost impossible for a farm to adhere to and would most likely put them out of business. The retroactive hazard pay would cost every farmer and farm business nearly \$5,000 per employee to cover the days in 2020 that there has been a state of emergency due to the COVID Pandemic. In addition, MD Department of Labor doesn't have the manpower to inspect these operations in time to meet the limited timelines farmers have to apply for and receive H-2A visa workers. H-2A housing is already inspected annually. Production agriculture is a time sensitive business that can't shut down for a few days or weeks. This bill would be devastating to the ag community.

The negative economic impact this bill would create on farmers that already have to compete with climate change, low commodity prices, and water & air quality regulations will be devastating.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU RESPECTFULLY OPPOSES SB 486

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396