



**Ben LaRocco**  
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*Tuesday, March 5, 2024*  
*Economic Matters Committee - Bill Hearing*  
*1:00 PM - House Office Building, Room 230, Annapolis, MD*  
*In Support of HB 1425*

Good afternoon Chairman Wilson, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee. My Name is Ben LaRocco, and I'm the Senior Director of Government Relations for EarnIn, one of the largest providers of Earned Wage Access services, or EWA, in the country.

I'm speaking today in support of House Bill 1425, a Maryland specific regulatory framework for EWA services based on a national model that has been negotiated for several years, with input from dozens of legislators, regulators, attorneys general, and consumer advocacy groups. It provides a strong regulatory framework to allow regulatory oversight, and provide safe access for consumers to use the product.

In Maryland, more than 75,000 residents have used our earned wage access product, including more than 31,000 last year. The top employers of our customers include Johns Hopkins Medical, Baltimore County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Prince George's County Public Schools.

People are smart. They know how to manage their own money and choose the products that are best for them. Hard working families across the state are voting with their pocketbooks to choose EarnIn because it is safe and effective. The current business model empowers consumers because all fees are voluntary, and customers can reschedule or postpone their need to repay with no penalty if life happens and they can't repay. There are never any mandatory fees, credit checks, late fees, interest or credit reporting under the current framework.

Last year, Connecticut advanced a framework similar to the OFR proposal in HB 246. This framework effectively bans the current EWA business model and forced us to leave the state of Connecticut. Our customers there were left with nothing on short notice and overwhelmingly worse off both financially and emotionally.

Our customers saw 10% more overdrafts than a similar group of customers next door in Massachusetts. Thousands of dollars of fees that should have been avoided.

We did a poll of our customers to ask them how they were faring, and 74% of respondents reported additional stress about their finances having lost EarnIn. 67%



report cutting back on doing things they enjoy. 60% felt helpless, and sadness, panic, and outrage are emotions large percentages of customers said they felt after losing access to our service.

Thirty four percent said they need to resort to overdraft fees or late fees during emergencies because they did not have any other options.

Our customers are real people. People like you and me. They are not just numbers on a piece of paper. Teachers, nurses, and warehouse workers trying to do the best with their lives. They've chosen EarnIn to help them, and we hope you will allow us to continue to do so.

I encourage the Committee to pass HB 1425 and ensure your constituents have access to this safe and effective product.