



Eastern Atlantic States

REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

February 25, 2020

Chairman Dereck Davis
Economic Matters Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chairman Davis and distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Concepcion Morales and I am the Council Representative for the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters. Thank you for the opportunity to share our **opposition to House Bill 956 – Labor and Employment – Wage Payment and Collection – General Contractor Liability**. This legislation removes a critical protection for carpenters in Maryland by eliminating the ability of an employee from taking a private right of action against a general contractor for violations of Maryland’s wage and hour laws by subcontractors on a project. When the General Assembly passed this law in 2018, it was a tremendous victory for our most vulnerable employees. To our knowledge, the law’s passage has neither been abused nor a burden to general contractors in Maryland while affording employees an added protection.

Let us not forget why the General Assembly passed general contractor liability in the first place. 580,000 workers are cheated out of \$875 million each year in just Maryland. While \$1,500 may seem like a small amount of money to people in this room, that is meals, transit passes, and health coverage all put in jeopardy. The problem is even more dramatic in the trades as fly-by-night and insolvent subcontractors cannot be traced after jobs are completed. Sadly, the subcontractor has been paid for the job. The general contractor has been paid for the job. And the workers that put in the time and effort to complete a job is left without the proper wages.

This legislation undoes the protections afforded by general contractor liability. It may appear like a small change – the worker simply has to notify the general contractor in writing. However, what this proposal fails to take into account is that it asks the worker to put a target on their back. To put it simply, the employee will be blackballed from the industry. Finally, I will ask what party is in the best position to protect against wage theft? The Employee or the general contractor? We must retain the protections of general contractor liability. I urge an **unfavorable** report for House Bill 956.

Sincerely,

Concepcion Morales
Council Representative
Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters