



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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March 3, 2020

To: House Economic Matters Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 1123 - Labor and Employment - Maryland Wage and Hour Law - Agricultural Stands**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 1123, legislation that establishes an exemption from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law for an individual employed at an agricultural stand that primarily sells retail perishable or seasonal fresh fruits, vegetables, or horticultural commodities that the farmer has produced.

Most of the employees that fill these seasonal farm market jobs are youth between 16 and 18 years old. In most cases, this is their first job. The cost of labor is a major issue with farm profitability especially when the farmer retains ownership in their crop and looks to retail it to the consumer. Even at a retail price, margins are very small. Increasing the minimum wage 33% prevents a farmer from offering youth opportunities to have their first job at their operation. This bill would allow the farmer to offer those beginning jobs without a massive increase in labor costs.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support maximum opportunities for youth to work on farms. We believe youth gain important life skills, learn safety around animals and equipment, benefit from involvement in programs like 4-H and FFA, become interested in careers in agriculture, better understand that farmers are professionals and use best management practices, and establish a strong work ethic. Therefore, we urge government not to limit these opportunities.

Amendment: Strike language on page 3, lines 7-9 and replace with: **(15) IS EMPLOYED AT AN AGRICULTURAL STAND, RETAIL FARM OR FARMERS' MARKET THAT PRIMARILY SELLS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS THAT THE EMPLOYER HAS PRODUCED.**

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1123 WITH AMENDMENT

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Director of Government Relations

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