



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Favorable

House Bill 1123: Labor and Employment--Maryland Wage and Hour Law--Agricultural Stands
House Economic Matters Committee

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 4,500 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees and families.

House Bill 1123 would establish an exemption from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law (minimum wage) for an individual employed at an agricultural stand that sells perishable or seasonable fresh fruits, vegetables or horticultural commodities that the employer has produced. This exemption was not included as part of the agricultural exemption set forth in HB 166/SB 280: Fight for Fifteen, which the General Assembly passed last session.

There are over 1,400 family farm or agricultural stands in Maryland that operate primarily on a seasonal basis. These small businesses largely employ individuals in their first job, including high school and college students who are available for seasonal employment.

Due to the volatile nature of farming, futures pricing, weather and market competition, the ability to maintain a viable agricultural stand can mean the difference between a farm staying solvent year over year. Being forced to comply with the state's mandated minimum wage at its current level puts these family-owned-and-operated stands at a competitive disadvantage relative to commercial grocers.

Small businesses are the driving force for job creation and economic expansion in Maryland and make up 92 percent of the state's registered companies. The Maryland Chamber of Commerce believes that state policy should protect and promote their ability to remain solvent as well as grow and expand.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **Favorable Report** on HB 1123.