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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT BY BILL SPONSOR – SENATOR MARY BETH
CAROZZA**
**SENATE BILL 403 LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT–
MARYLAND WAGE AND HOUR LAW—AGRICULTURAL STANDS**
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING
FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Thank you, Chair Kelley and Vice Chair Feldman and member of the Senate Finance Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 403 with Senate President Emeritus Miller and request your support of SB 403 as amended that simply clarifies the current agricultural exemption to the Maryland Wage and Hour Law to include those employed at an agricultural stand, retail farm or farmers' market.

As way of background, Senate Bill 403 is one of the initiatives included in the bipartisan Senate Small Business Workgroup's legislative package unveiled earlier this session. The legislation was drafted in the fall after workgroup members heard from their local farm bureaus and chambers of commerce members who raised concerns that the agricultural exemption in the new minimum wage law did not include agricultural stands and farmers' markets.

The current Maryland Wage and Hour Agricultural Exemption exempts those employed by an employer who is engaged in the processing of perishable food items, those employed in agriculture if the employer used no more than 500 agricultural-worker days per quarter during the preceding year, those engaged primarily in the range production of livestock, employed as a hand-harvest laborer, or is paid on a piece-rate basis.

Senate Bill 403 clarifies the Agricultural Exemption in the current Maryland Wage and Hour Law by including those employed at an agricultural stand and as amended by including a retail farm or a farmers' market that primarily sells at retail perishable or seasonal fresh fruits, vegetables, or horticultural commodities that the employer has produced.

I believe Senate Bill 403 is consistent with the original intent of the agricultural exemption to the new minimum wage law and simply clarifies the exemption to include agricultural stands, retail farms and farmers' markets as narrowly defined in the amendment.

In closing, I want to thank all the local farm bureau and chambers of commerce members who worked with us during the interim to identify the problem with the current agricultural exemption and helped us craft a narrow, targeted bill to clarify and strengthen the agricultural exemption which will be helpful to our farm families across the State of Maryland. I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 403 in support of our farm families.