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**SB 403**  
**Labor and Employment – Maryland Wage and Hour Laws – Agricultural Stands**  
**Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee**  
**February 20, 2020**

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project works to expand and enforce the right of low-wage workers to receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work through litigation and public policy. The PJC **OPPOSES SB 403** and requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

**SB 403 will prevent workers from meeting their and their families' basic needs.** The decision to buy local food and produce has grown over recent years. Local farmers markets, for example, have gone from 2,000 markets in 1994 to 8,600 in 2019.<sup>1</sup> This growth has provided job opportunities. A variety of people from different walks of life work at farm stands. Reducing protections for workers in one job requires them to find another job to fill the gap. But one job should be enough, and workers should be paid in full for the work they do. SB 403 will prevent this from happening, decrease worker income, and make it more difficult for workers to meet their and their families' basic needs.

**SB 403 hurts workers by creating an unnecessary exemption.** The current exemptions in the Maryland Wage and Hour Law should not be expanded to accommodate businesses' desire to pay employees less. The Maryland minimum wage rate just increased in January of this year.<sup>2</sup> Understanding that an employer's ability to pay its employees may differ depending on the size of the employer, the Maryland Minimum Wage law outlines a ladder of minimum wage steps from the present until 2026. This ladder already includes consideration of small businesses and their operations. An exemption to further exclude more workers from protections is not needed and will do greater harm than good.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC **OPPOSES SB 403** and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report. Should you have any questions, please call Tyra Robinson at 410-625-9409 ext. 223.

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<sup>1</sup> Jodi Helmer, National Public Radio, *Why Are So Many Farmers Markets Failing? Because the Market is Saturated*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2019/03/17/700715793/why-are-so-many-farmers-markets-failing-because-the-market-is-saturated> (Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Md. Code Lab. & Empl. § 3-413(c)(1) and (2)

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