



Testimony offered on behalf of:
THE GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN SUPPORT OF:
SB 862 – Labor and Employment – Minimum Wage – Allegany County and Garrett County

Finance Committee
March 12, 2020

On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 600 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our support for **SB 862 – Labor and Employment – Minimum Wage – Allegany County and Garrett County**.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour was a 49% increase to Maryland's previous rate of \$10.10 per hour. At \$11 per hour, Maryland's minimum wage is 26% higher than our neighboring state of West Virginia (\$8.75/hour) and 52% higher than Pennsylvania (\$7.25/hour).

Raising Maryland's minimum wage is putting businesses in Garrett and Allegany Counties at a competitive disadvantage with our neighbors. And for those that say the higher wage will help recruit workers, that is absolutely false. At the previous rate of \$10.10 this higher minimum wage did not help attract workers to the westernmost part of the State.

The average household income for Garrett County is \$41,303 as compared to \$67,454 for Maryland. Implementing a one-size fits all minimum wage in Maryland disproportionately negatively impacts businesses in the westernmost part of the state as compared to our more affluent urban counterparts. Businesses in Garrett and Allegany counties will have to increase their wage scales at much higher percentages than companies in Montgomery, Howard, Prince Georges, etc.

Businesses in Garrett and Allegany counties need more time to prepare for and absorb the economic impacts of the minimum wage increase. Extending the phase-in time through 2028 for Garrett and Allegany counties will help minimize the impacts and level the playing field for businesses located here.

The Chamber respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE committee report on SB 862**.

Sincerely,

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