



February 3, 2021

The Honorable Dereck E. Davis
Chairman House Economic Matters Committee
231 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **OPPOSE** – **HB 581** - Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Worker Protection Act)

Dear Chairman Davis and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Beer Wholesalers Association (MBWA) we are writing in opposition to **HB 581** which proposes legislation that would create several new employer mandates and costs for our members.

The MBWA consists of 22 Maryland businesses employing over 1,400 Maryland citizens that are majority owned and operated generational family businesses. We support the intent of the legislation and have made extensive efforts to provide our employees with a safe and healthy work environment and continued benefits during catastrophic times as is currently being presented to us during the Covid19 pandemic. We do not, however, support raising the mandated requirements and costs outlined in this legislation.

The suggested mandates include hazard pay, financial assistance, new leave programs and additional measures that will lead to additional costs during a time when we are doing all we can to retain our existing workforce while providing the numerous benefits we already provide. While we agree that all workers should be provided safe and healthy work environment during times of emergencies, the broad definitions of emergency, essential employer and employee go beyond the scope of the emergency we are now facing under Covid19.

Members of the MBWA are consistently experiencing large increases in fuel costs, health insurance costs, labor costs, workers compensation costs, utility costs and other general operating costs. As small business owners, MBWA members contribute greatly to community programs, churches, hospitals, and nonprofits to ensure that all their neighbors enjoy the benefits their communities have to offer.

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We respectfully request this legislation be rejected in its current form. The MBWA is available to meet personally and participate in further discussions as this legislation is addressed by you and the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Manis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicholas G. Manis
Executive Director

CC: John Favazza