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LEGISLATIVE POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

House Bill 581

Labor and Employment-Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act)

House Economic Matters Committee

Friday, February 5, 2021

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

The Talbot County Chamber of Commerce opposes House Bill 581 as generally detrimental to our business community, at a time when they are already struggling to survive a stressful and changing economic environment.

This bill creates several new programs, employer mandates and increased costs, imposed during declared states of emergency, which are especially burdensome to businesses. These include raising hazard pay by \$3/hour; requiring employers to reimburse healthcare costs; new programs for bereavement and health leave; and expanding employee rights for refusing work, workplace safety standards and health emergency preparedness plans.

Many Talbot businesses already provide these benefits in their compensation packages, particularly those performing essential functions; those not classified as "essential," face onerous requirements and increased costs during critical times when their focus should be on carrying out their mission and staying in business.

Talbot County business owners are remarkable and resilient, but they simply cannot be expected to comply with the overly broad and poorly defined mandates contained in House Bill 581, especially while navigating previously passed operational mandates, combined with the economic impacts of the global pandemic. For example, the definitions of "emergency," "essential employer," and "essential employee" are far too broad and ambiguous and would cause implications reaching far beyond the scope of the current public health emergency.

On behalf of our 600+ chamber members, representing more than 5,000 employees, the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on HB 581.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Kreiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Kreiner
President/CEO