



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Office. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

*President*

Donna S. Edwards

*Secretary-Treasurer*

Gerald W. Jackson

**HB 841 – Labor and Employment – Maryland Wage and Hour Law – Agricultural Stands, Retail Farms, and Farmers’ Markets  
House Economic Matters Committee  
March 2, 2021**

**OPPOSE**

**Donna S. Edwards  
President  
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 841 – Labor and Employment – Maryland Wage and Hour Law – Agricultural Stands, Retail Farms, and Farmers’ Markets. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

There are, currently, fourteen exemptions to minimum wage law in Maryland. From workers at drive-in theaters, to workers at a drug store that sells food for on-site consumption and has a gross income of \$400,000 per year, or less. At least four of the exemptions to paying workers minimum wage relate directly to agriculture, with a fifth one being regularly enjoyed by the industry via the exemption on immediate family members.

We see no reason to continue adding exemptions to paying Marylanders minimum wage. The argument, no doubt, will be made that workers at agricultural stands, retail farms, and farmers’ markets do not deserve to be paid appropriately because of the extremely low profit margins of farms. The problem is that the production of our food and the work provided to do so is already exempted under existing law. This activity is for retail sale of produce. Our grocery stores need to pay minimum wage, and they are engaged in direct retail sales, as well. We will also hear that most workers at these stands are teenagers, that this is their first job, and we cannot deny them the ability to work with onerous wages placed on the employers. Under current minimum wage law, those between 16 and 18 are already paid lower than minimum wage, and are, therefore, already exempted from the full minimum wage for adults.

We raised the wage in Maryland, and a full phase-in is still five years away. This is no time to take a step backwards and deny more workers the minimum wage. **For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable vote on HB 841.**