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NFIB-Maryland – 60 West St, Ste. 101 – Annapolis, MD 21401 – [www.NFIB.com/Maryland](http://www.NFIB.com/Maryland)

TO: House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: NFIB – Maryland

DATE: March 2, 2021

RE: **OPPOSE HOUSE BILL 1199** – Workers’ Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – COVID-19

Founded in 1943, NFIB is the voice of small business, advocating on behalf of America’s small and independent business owners, both in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals. With more than 250,000 members nationwide, and nearly 4,000 here in Maryland, we work to protect and promote the ability of our members to grow and operate their business.

On behalf of Maryland’s small businesses, NFIB-Maryland opposes House Bill 1199 – legislation that would establish a presumption that certain employees who contracted COVID-19 and the affiliated respiratory ailments did so in the course of employment.

Worker’ compensation claims are heavily based on science and data. The medical field is learning new things about COVID-19 each day – prevalence among specific cohorts, transmission rates, mutations, etc. House Bill 1199 makes a very broad assumption that all “essential workers” contracting COVID-19 did so as a result of their employment. Peer reviewed research justifying this does not exist and should therefore not be codified for purposes of granting essential employees workers’ compensation benefits.

Including COVID-19 as a presumptive occupational disease sets the precedent to include other community diseases for workers’ compensation benefits. That would be particularly troubling given the fact that reports show the most common instance where COVID-19 is spread is at family gatherings of 10 or more people and *not* at work.

NFIB encourages the legislature to allow the Workers’ Compensation Commission to continue looking at COVID-19 claims on a case-by-case basis and resist the move to make it a presumed occupational disease. For these reasons, **NFIB opposes HB1199** and requests an unfavorable committee report.