

UNFAVORABLE
SB 727, HB 1326 - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act –
Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave

The Howard County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) is a business organization comprised of 700 small businesses, corporations, non-profits, and governmental agencies all working together for the betterment of the Howard County business community. Our mission is to provide advocacy, connections, and access to timely information to advance the growth and success of the Howard County business community.

It seems that the ink is still damp on the **Maryland Healthy Working Families Act** that was enacted only three years ago and here employers are being asked to make difficult, costly adjustments to personnel policies to comply with additional amendments to the statute, which are difficult and costly already.

The purpose here may be to address concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, as written this legislation could be applied to any number of other situations as determined by the multiple health departments with the authority to declare and define such emergencies. Terms appear vague and may be subject to interpretation, which may play havoc with administration and enforcement.

Has a justification for an additional 112 hours of emergency “Public Health Emergency Leave” been established?

Many employees have been working from home since the outbreak of COVID-19 began. Should an employer be required to provide them with sick leave to stay home?

The bill is overly burdensome and complicated, and it appears to be using the pandemic as an excuse to make amendments in areas which were compromises agreed upon when the original legislation was passed in 2018:

1. removing the agricultural and temp worker exemption;
2. expanding the definition of a family member;
3. eliminates the requirement for documentation or notice for leave;
4. requires leave be provided in full regardless of how long the employee has been employed; and
5. retroactive application of the leave.

If the Maryland General Assembly insists on passing another major labor bill like SB 375 and HB 1326 that will further burden small employers with unreasonable payroll costs and administrative expense, they will do what they have always done in such situations, they will look for ways to trim payroll costs. That usually means a leaner payroll, fewer benefits and possibly out-sourcing or relocating.



6240 Old Dobbin Lane ■ Suite 110 ■ Columbia, MD 21045

If this legislation was a matter of great importance where the “cost to benefit ratio” was reasonably positive, it might be “marketable” but in our view it clearly has the potential to do much more harm than good. We hope the members of the Senate Finance and House Economic Matters Committees will agree and vote unfavorable.