



*Century Distributors, Inc.  
15710 Crabbs Branch Way  
Rockville, MD 20855*

February 3, 2021

To: Chair, Delegate Davis and Committee:

House Bill 581 if passed will have an enormous financial impact on our business. Century Distributors is woman owned business located in Montgomery County employing over 175 people. Back in April of 2020 I thought Covid -19 would decimate our business, but Century Distributors was able to navigate and pivoted to remain a sustainable business in Montgomery County and the State of Maryland. This past year has been incredibly difficult for everyone but especially for small family owned businesses. Century was deemed as essential employer, navigating everyday how to keep our employees safe but still providing our customers with the goods and services then need to run their businesses. Century was able to quickly secure PPE goods for our employees, placing proper written protocol in place and providing PPE to all employees at no cost.

If passed, the bill would create a number of new, costly, and onerous requirements for Maryland employers including:

**1) Hazard Pay** - If passed, HB 581 would require employers to pay workers defined as essential **an additional \$3 per hour in hazard pay** dating back to the start of a state of emergency. This is not the time during a global pandemic to implement new costly and complex employer mandates. The hazard pay would wipe out any business with the unknown how long an emergency would be in place. At an additional \$3.00 per employee, just for our small business would be almost 2 million in additional payroll using Covid-19 as an example approaching it's one year anniversary. What small business has additional money to cover such an expense?

**2) Financial Assistance for healthcare costs** - The bill would require employers to **provide financial assistance for unreimbursed health care costs** to each essential worker who becomes sick or is injured if the sickness or injury is related to the emergency. It does not require the employee to prove that they contracted said illness at the workplace.

**3) New Leave Program** - The legislation creates a **new leave program** whereby employers will be required to provide at least 3 days of bereavement leave and 14 days of health leave. Health leave is defined as paid leave during an emergency due to the worker's illness or other health needs related to the emergency. Again, it does not require the employee to prove that they contracted said illness at the workplace.

**4) Right to Refuse Work** - If passed, the bill will afford essential employees the **right to refuse work**. This gives employees the discretion to make this decision, at the moment, without a mechanism for addressing abuse or verification by the employer. In addition, it is not clear that this would not apply to teleworking employees of essential employers, as defined by the bill.

Even more concerning, the definitions of emergency, essential employer and essential employee contained within the bill are extremely broad and overly ambiguous. They go well beyond the scope of the public health emergency we are currently navigating as a result of COVID-19. **Nearly every type of employer in Maryland is included in the scope of the legislation**, regardless of risk-profile. **In fact, 15 industry sectors that contain a combined total of 76 categories are defined as essential employers in the legislation.**

The costs of this bill would be devastating to Maryland's employers, who are already struggling with a global pandemic and compounding financial implications of other state mandates like increased minimum wage and paid sick and safe leave. Maryland's employers cannot reasonably be expected to comply with the broad and unwell defined mandates contained within House Bill 581, especially when they continue to overcome the operational and economic implications of COVID-19.

All sectors of businesses have suffered greatly these past 11 months navigating Covid-19 pandemic. We strongly oppose bill 581.

Debbie Robins



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