

February 16, 2021

Senator Dolores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB502 – Labor and Employment – Maryland Wage and Hour Law – Agricultural Stands, Retail Farms and Farmers’ Markets

Position; SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our 500-member businesses and more than 45,000 employees in Montgomery County, The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce is in **Support of SB502-Labor and Employment–Maryland Wage and Hour Law – Agricultural Stands, Retail Farms and Farmers’ Markets.**

Senate Bill 403 would establish an exemption from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law (minimum wage) for an individual employed at an agricultural stand that sells perishable or seasonable fresh fruits, vegetables or horticultural commodities that the employer has produced.

There are over 1,400 family farm or agricultural stands in Maryland that primarily operate on a seasonal basis. Most of the employees working these stands are young adults, working their first job or college students and high school students working seasonally. The Greater Bethesda area and Montgomery County is home to many of these markets which our residents and businesses enjoy supporting.

The current mandated minimum wage puts the owners of the farmers markets at a competitive disadvantage vs the commercial grocery stores. These are small business owners that are most often seasonal in nature and are fighting to stay in business just for part of the year. Having to pay the current minimum wage just adds to the pressures they have for doing business in the State. The margins for the farmers markets are very small vs grocery store owners and the increasing minimum wage is one more issue that makes it so difficult for farmers in the State.

We thank Senators Carozza, Gallion, Peters, West, Klausmeier and Ready for sponsoring this legislation and urge the Senate Finance Committee to **vote FAVORABLE.** Thank you for your consideration of our remarks.

Sincerely,



Allie Williams
President & CEO