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M.H. JIM ESTEPP  
President & CEO

The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chairman  
Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 2, 2021

Chairman Davis and Honorable Committee Members:

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 581. I have a great deal of respect for the work those in House Committees do, and I know your goal in this legislation is to protect Maryland's workforce.

What we cannot do in that effort is to cripple the employers that hire and retain those workers.

The bill offers more ambiguity than clarity, especially concerning terms essential to the bill such as "emergency," "essential employer" and "essential employee." The bill goes beyond even the significant scope of the emergency we face in our current public health crisis. The broad brush in the bill's language would appear to make every employer essential, as fifteen industry sectors are included, with 76 categories considered in the definition.

Even outside of the worrisome generalizations in language, the specifics of the legislation could be devastating to statewide employers, many of whom are barely making it through the pandemic.

Employers of those positions deemed newly essential would have to provide an additional \$3 an hour, moving forward, and in backpay to those affected. Adding coverages for unreimbursed healthcare to those deemed essential if a sickness or injury is related to the emergency, without proving that either was contracted at the place of employment, adds an additional burden to employers.

In addition, the new leave provisions added to the bill, also without any necessary evidence of injury or sickness occurring in the workplace, create an even more onerous and costly tab on already struggling employers.

This a difficult time to work in many challenging fields in the state. It is equally difficult to those looking to employ people here, while paying bills, keeping the lights on and educating their children from home.

Let us respect those whose businesses are already suffering without adding these well-intentioned but crippling burdens to thinning bottom lines.

Thank you again for your work on behalf of all Marylanders.

Respectfully,

M.H. Jim Estopp