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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Finance Committee

**SB 502 Labor and Employment - Maryland Wage and Hour Law - Agricultural Stands,  
Retail Farms, and Farmers' Markets**

**Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you, Chair Kelley and Vice Chair Feldman and member of the Senate Finance Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 502 and to request your support. Senate Bill 502 simply clarifies the current agricultural exemption to the Maryland Wage and Hour Law **to include those employed at an agricultural stand, retail farm or farmers' market that primarily sells agricultural products that the employer has produced.**

As way of background, Senate Bill 502 is one of the initiatives included in the bipartisan Senate Small Business Workgroup's legislative package unveiled last session. The legislation was drafted last fall after workgroup members heard from their local farm bureaus and chambers of commerce members who raised concerns that the agricultural exemption in the new minimum wage law did **not** include agricultural stands and farmers' markets.

The current Maryland Wage and Hour Agricultural Exemption exempts those employed by an employer who is engaged in the processing of perishable food items, those employed in agriculture if the employer used no more than 500 agricultural-worker days per quarter during the preceding year, those engaged primarily in the range production of livestock, employed as a hand-harvest laborer or is paid on a piece-rate basis.

Senate Bill 502 clarifies the Agricultural Exemption in the current Maryland Wage and Hour Law by including those employed at an agricultural stand by including a retail farm or a farmers' market that primarily sells at retail perishable or seasonal

fresh fruits, vegetables, or horticultural commodities that the employer has produced.

I believe Senate Bill 502 is consistent with the original intent of the agricultural exemption to the new minimum wage law and simply clarifies the exemption to include agricultural stands, retail farms and farmers' markets as narrowly defined in the bill.

My panel today includes Colby Ferguson with Maryland Farm Bureau, Michelle Wright a Wicomico County farmer, and Lisa Gaver a tree farmer in Garrett County. They will explain more background and how this legislation will affect their farms, especially in the wake of a pandemic.

In closing, I want to thank all the local farm bureau and chambers of commerce members who worked with us to identify the problem with the current agricultural exemption and helped us craft a narrow, targeted bill to clarify and strengthen the agricultural exemption which will be helpful to our farm families across the State of Maryland. I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 502 in support of our **farm families**.