

Good Afternoon,

My name is Michelle Wright and I live in Wicomico County. I am co-owner of a road side farm market located on Rt. 50. Our family farms approximately 800 acres of produce, corn and soybeans, as well as, we grow chickens for Perdue Farms. The majority of the produce is sold directly to our customers that visit our produce market.

Being a seasonal business, we employ 20 to 25 depending on the time of the year. Their daily tasks include stocking shelves, waiting on customers and daily cleaning and sanitizing. Keep in mind that we are typically providing their first job experience. We teach them life-long job skills that they will hopefully carry with them after graduating from school, college, or trade school. The young people don't have any prior job experience. We believe that an entry level position for someone with little to no job experience does not justify a \$12.50 per hour wage.

The financial impact is huge for agricultural stands, retail farms, and farmer's markets. The current minimum wage increase for 2021 and 2022 would require us to pay at least an additional \$16,000 in payroll plus the additional payroll taxes and interest to borrow the money. To give an example, we would need to sell an additional 37,000 ears of corn to cover this increase. The business of agritourism and selling produce on Maryland's Eastern Shore does not have a large margin to absorb this exorbitant wage increase.

-This wage increase will force our family to make some very difficult decisions such as:

\*Do we hire experienced/older help to get more for our money?

\*Do we hire less people and add to our current workload?

\*Do we increase the cost of food/products/services?

\*Find creative ways to cover hours open with less people?

Our family urges each of you to vote in favor of SB502 to exempt agriculture stands, retail farms and farmer's markets from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law. This was brought to your attention last year but time lapsed before you could vote. We appreciate your willingness to revisit this bill now and your commitment to our beautiful state of Maryland and the agriculture industry. If you need more information or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

L. Michelle Wright

Vice President, Cornerstone Farms, Inc. T/A Wright's Market

9300 Old Railroad Road

Mardela Springs, MD 21837

410-251-1388

michelle@wrightsmarket.com