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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 210 – COVID-19 Claim – Civil Immunity

Statement of Support by Co-Sponsor – Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you, Senator Chris West, for introducing Senate Bill 210 – COVID-19 Claim – Civil Immunity, which is critical legislation for the very survival of the business community. I write in strong support of Senate Bill 210 and respectfully request a favorable report from the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, members of the bipartisan Senate Small Business Workgroup have been holding Zoom meeting with leaders of key business associations including the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Business, and the Restaurant Association of Maryland to better understand their most pressing COVID-19 challenges and their recovery priorities. These small business advocates made clear that protection against unfair and frivolous COVID-19 lawsuits is a top priority.

As a member of the Senate Small Business Workgroup and after working with hundreds of local small businesses during COVID-19, I personally can attest to the sense of urgency on the part of small businesses to pass this emergency COVID-19 civil immunity bill now as so many of our job creators are suffering under the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

My district includes three of the largest small business advocacy groups -- the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, and the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce. These local business operators are doing all they can to keep the doors open during COVID-19.

Limited liability protection for businesses that have made good faith efforts to comply with recommended State and Federal guidelines is critical to their long-term success, impacting jobs and income.

The most powerful testimony comes from those on the front lines of our small businesses. Salisbury Chamber of Commerce President and CEO wrote in this testimony in strong support of SB 210: "The prospect that a business financially survives this economic disaster but fails under the weight of litigation is frightening."

Susan Jones, Executive Director of the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, also writes in strong support of SB 210: "Now more than ever, we need to come together to pass needed liability protections. We are certain you understand the acute threat of lawsuits during moments of economic vulnerability. We urge you to act now and provide protections to prevent a wave of lawsuits from hampering Maryland's return to a robust economy."

With great urgency on behalf of Maryland's small businesses, I urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 210.