

February 2, 2022

The Honorable C.T. Wilson  
Chair, Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Wilson,

On behalf of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, representing 575 members with over 40,000 employees, I am writing to urge you to **oppose HB 496, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program**. Now is not the time to implement a costly employer mandate as businesses struggle to overcome a crippling pandemic. I am very concerned that the implementation of this legislation will result in additional costs and administrative burden to employers, at a time when most can least afford it.

HB 496 does exclude businesses with fewer than 15 employees are exempt, which is a good step, thank you. However, HB 496 still has the potential to provide **up to 24 weeks of leave** to employees, in addition to what is granted by FMLA and Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, without an employer having any input into when that leave may be taken. During a historic workforce shortage and a time when leave management has become a daily obstacle to keeping a business functioning, HB 496 stands to make a bad problem worse. Further, the employer has no avenue to report fraudulent use of leave as HB 496 is currently written.

To say that COVID-19 has had a tremendous, detrimental impact on Maryland's economy would be an understatement. Maryland's already beleaguered small businesses continue to struggle to stay afloat and keep their doors open. A period of drawn out, anemic economic recovery and future uncertainty of the impacts of new COVID-19 variants is not the time to implement new employer mandates that stand to negatively impact Maryland small businesses and job creators.

Respectfully, we hope we can count on you to stand up for businesses and non-profits, and **oppose HB 496, Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program**.

Sincerely,



Paul Frey, IOM  
President and CEO