

INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENTS OF MARYLAND, INC.

DBA BIG I MARYLAND



House Economic Matters Committee

House Bill 496

Oppose

Dear Chairman Wilson and the Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 496, entitled Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment.

The Independent Insurance Agents of Maryland (IIAM) is the State's oldest trade association of independent insurance agents. It represents 200 independent agencies, which employ over 2000 people in the state. IIAM represents independent insurance agents and brokers who present consumers with a choice of policy options from a variety of different insurance companies. These small, medium, and large businesses offer a variety of insurance products – including property, casualty, life, health, employee benefit plans, and retirement products.

IIAM opposes House Bill 496, entitled Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment. The vast majority of the IIAM membership is made up of small businesses who operate on very slim margins, especially in this current business environment. While, in theory, HB 496 is well intentioned, one-person taking leave from these small businesses would have a detrimental and lasting financial impact.

If the will of the legislature is to move forward with this program, we believe a higher threshold for exempt businesses is needed. The definition of employer should be changed to mean a person that employs less than 75 employees in the State.

We respectfully ask for an unfavorable report on HB 496.