



NAACP

Maryland

STATE CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 549

Fair Wage Act of 2023H

Before House Economic Matters Committee

By Willie Flowers, President, NAACP Maryland State Conference

February 27, 2023

CHAIRMAN WILSON AND COMMITTEE IT IS A PLEASURE TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF LEGISLATION THAT WILL ENHANCE THE LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND.

AS YOU KNOW, THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING HAS RISEN SINCE THE ORIGINAL LEGISLATION WAS WRITTEN SEVERAL YEARS AGO. AT THE TIME THE BILL WAS WRITTEN IT SEEMED ODD THAT THERE WAS DELAY IN RAISING THE AGE AND NOW WE SIT IN A WORLD WHERE PRICES FOR EVERYTHING FROM EGGS TO GAS HAS GONE TO LEVELS THAT NO ONE COULD IMAGINE WHEN THE BILL WAS FIRST WRITTEN.

THE BILL AT THAT TIME WAS OPPOSED BY THE SAME PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE IT NOW. THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED WITH THE DELAY BUT IT WAS THE WRONG THING TO DO THEN AND IT WOULD BE WRONG TO OPPOSE HB-549 NOW BECAUSE THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT EXPEDITING THE INCREASE OF MINIMUM WAGE SO THAT FAMILIES CAN BUY GOOD AND CLOTHES FOR THE MEMBERS AND PEOPLE SO NOT HAVE TO WORK AS HARD ON HOURLY WAGES THAT ALWAYS TAKE THEM AWAY FROM FAMILY TIME AND WORK.

THE OTHER FACTOR THAT WEIGHS HEAVILY ON THE NEED OF CHANGING THIS BILL IS THE MAJOR IMPACT THAT TECHNOLOGY HAS HAD ON THE WORKFORCE. SPECIFICALLY TALKING ABOUT SERVICE JOBS AND FRONTLINE STAFFS AT PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT LIKE HOTELS, GROCERY STORES AND OTHER RETAIL LOCATIONS TECHNOLOGY HAS ALLOWED EMPLOYERS TO CHANGE OVERALL BUDGETS BECAUSE SOME OF THE JOBS LIKE THE SELF-CHECK AT THE GROCERY STORES HAVE ALLOWED THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO REPLACE SOME JOBS WITH DEVICES AND

NAACP

Maryland State Conference

8775 Cloudleap Court, Columbia, MD 21045 Suite 200

www.naacpmaryland.org

INNOVATIONS THAT HAVE AUTOMATED WORKFORCES. WHILE THIS CAN BE VIEWED ANY WAY YOU LIKE IT WHAT IS DOES MORE THAN ANYTHING IS IT ALLOWS EMPLOYERS TO SAVE MONEY AND THIS SHOULD GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO EMBRACE AN INCREASE IN WAGES TO \$15.

FINALLY, THIS BILL WILL BE A TRUE INCENTIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN THE WORKFORCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT THEIR TAKE HOME PAY IS ENOUGH TO BE PROUD OF.

THE NAACP MARYLAND STATE CONFERENCE SUPPORTS THIS INCREASE FOR THE WORKING PEOPLE OF MARYLAND.