



VISION - *BRIDGE Maryland sees the state challenged by a history of inequity but engaged in community organizing for a more just tomorrow.*

MISSION - *BRIDGE Maryland uses intentional relationship building, organizing, and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world.*

Testimony in Support of HB 549  
House Economic Matters Committee  
2/23/2023

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the Committee. I am writing on behalf of BRIDGE Maryland, Inc. to **request a favorable report on HB 549 - Fair Wage Act of 2023 with Amendment.** When Maryland passed the Minimum Wage Act of 2019, it was a step in the right direction for people struggling to make ends meet on one salary. With inflation on the rise, in one of the wealthiest states in the nation, families are still struggling to meet basic human needs despite working full time. There is currently nowhere in the state that even a single adult with no children can afford a basic standard of living working at \$15 per hour. This is an unacceptable situation, and the Fair Wage Act will accelerate the timeline set in the 2019 bill and tie the state's minimum wage to the consumer price index (CPI).

BRIDGE Maryland is an interfaith non-profit organization that helped pass the Minimum Wage Act of 2019 and the Transportation and Training Bill in the early 2000s. What we learned then and know now is that while this bill will be very helpful to tip earners and hotel/motel workers, placing the CPI at a 5% cap should be the floor and not the ceiling. If the minimum wage is not working in concert with the CPI and inflation; Maryland will create another working poor class of people within two years from now. As the author of Reimagining Discipleship | Leaving A Legacy, I know factually that a living wage is imperative to building a lifestyle that is not limited to work alone. A living wage can make the difference between living and existing.

Thus, since 2019, Marylanders have weathered a pandemic. Frontline workers have worked tirelessly to keep our essential businesses and services running and have shown just how invaluable their work is. Sadly, the wage increases of 2019 did not keep up with inflation, meaning that those same workers we relied upon to keep the middle and upper classes comfortable are no better off than they were before. Therefore, we support this bill that the \$15 minimum wage be effective now with the amendment that the CPI works in concert with inflation increases. For these reasons, BRIDGE Maryland, Inc. requests a favorable report on HB 549 with an amendment.

Sincerely,

*Marlon Tilghman*

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