



Senate Bill 555: Fair Wage Act of 2023

Testimony from Glenn Roessler, Vigilante Coffee Company

**Submitted to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee, Hon. Melony Griffith, Chair
March 2, 2023**

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to share Vigilante Coffee's support for Senate Bill 555. My name is Glenn Roessler and I am the business development coordinator of Vigilante and share our support on behalf of our founder and owner Christopher Vigilante.

This is our eleventh year in business, with a roastery and cafe in Hyattsville and a café in College Park. Despite the pandemic, we are growing, and recently opened a third location – a new roastery and café in California – last year. Fair pay is a cornerstone of our business success.

We strongly supported Maryland's minimum wage increase to \$15, and we support this new effort to reach \$15 faster and to add annual cost of living adjustments in the future. The cost of living in Maryland is outpacing the minimum wage. When people working full-time struggle to afford the basics, businesses and the economy suffer.

We've always paid higher wages in order to attract and retain good employees. Our workers are on the front lines, interacting with customers and acting as the face of our business. They are often the reason people come back again and again, and tell their friends about us. Without our dedicated team, we wouldn't have weathered the pandemic, nor won the numerous awards we have over the years, including U.S. Roaster Championship Top 5 and "Best Coffee" by the Washington Post Express, and many others.

But when working people still can't afford the basics, how can we expect them to frequent Vigilante cafes? Getting to a \$15 minimum wage faster will help businesses like ours by putting more money in the hands of those most likely to spend it locally. Businesses across Maryland will see increased consumer demand as workers have more money in their pockets.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 faster will also raise more working people up and away from the social safety net. This will level the playing field for businesses like ours, while raising Maryland's wage floor will make it easier for lower wage businesses to raise pay together rather than individually.



Employers paying an increased minimum wage will find that employees stay longer with their companies, are more efficient, work harder and are more productive. I see many workers, especially in the food service industry, who have to work two or even three jobs to make ends meet.

The pandemic has made work in our industry even harder. If employees are exhausted because they're working numerous jobs just to pay the bills, or constantly worried about how they're going to clothe or feed their children, they're not able to put their best foot forward at work. And that hurts the bottom line.

We are in good company in supporting this legislation as a member of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage. Never has it been clearer that people are our most precious resources. When you invest in your employees, they invest in your business.

We urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 555. Thank you for your time.

Glenn Roessler

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