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SB555 Fair Wage Act of 2023 Finance Committee March 2nd, 2023 Support

Support AFSCME International and our public employees across the country, stand in support of HB 549 Fair Wage Act of 2023. Maryland workers deserve higher wages, and while the Minimum Wage Act of 2019 was a step in the right direction, workers continue to struggle to make ends meet. Inflation is on the rise, and even in one of the wealthiest states in the nation, families are 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 on less than \$15 per hour. The Fair Wage Act of 2023 will remedy this by accelerating the timeline set in the 2019 bill and tying the state's minimum wage to the consumer price index.

AFSCME International represents over 1.4 million public employees across the country. AFSCME members make American happen with members working in hundreds of different occupations, AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace and opportunities for all working families. We believe this legislation aligns with our values. We must leave no one behind.

Since the legislature passed the Minimum Wage Act in 2019, Marylanders have weathered a pandemic. Workers, many who were directly affected by the minimum wage law, worked tirelessly to keep our services running and displayed the important work that they do. Because the wage increases implemented by the 2019 law have not kept up with inflation, those workers who rely on those increase are in some cases no better off than they were before.

The Fair Wage Act of 2023 will make two changes to the current law that will have tremendous benefits to Maryland workers and the economy. First, the bill will accelerate the timeline so that all affected workers will be making \$15 by the end of this year. This will partially make up for the rising cost of living we have seen since the pandemic. To ensure workers do not fall behind again, the bill will also tie the minimum wage to the consumer price index. This way, wages will keep pace with cost of living, so that workers will at minimum be able to afford the necessities. Without indexing, workers earning the state's basement wage will continue to see the value of their work erode as costs rise.

For these reasons AFSCME International requests a favorable report on SB555.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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