

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 466:
Wage and Hour Law - Minor League Baseball Players - Exemption**

February 8th, 2024

Vice Chair Klausmeier and distinguished members of the Finance Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **Senate Bill: 466 Wage and Hour Law - Minor League Baseball Players - Exemption**.

My name is Steve Gonzalez, and I'm the Senior Vice President and Chief Employment Counsel for Major League Baseball. In addition to the Chair's comments, there are a few points I'd like to emphasize today.

First, to be clear, we're here not because our collective bargaining agreement for minor league players fails to meet state standards, but because both MLB and the players' own union believe that our negotiated compensation structure is most beneficial to the players. Unlike a typical hourly worker, players sought and receive part of their compensation in the form of housing, meals and even signing bonuses. Players also compete vigorously – at and away from the ballpark – to reach their dream of being called up to the Majors, so it doesn't benefit them to have their playing or practice time limited, or access to club facilities and resources restricted, due to having hourly worker status. Moreover, the parties' CBA here ensures that players achieve the standard of living intended by Maryland law anyway – as their minimum in-season salary alone would cover them for 56-66 hours per week depending on the player's level in 2024 – but does so while recognizing that the experience of a player is unique compared to hourly workers who can only work at employer-specified times.

In other words, this bill recognizes that players should be treated as salaried workers who may perform certain job-related activities for their own benefit and development, even if those activities are not required by the employer. For example, on top of the real problems identified by the Chair, treating players as hourly workers creates the additional conundrum of determining what hours should even be counted because players do things on their own time and at home during the season and offseason for physical fitness, studying their craft or otherwise seeking a competitive edge. This is one reason why players are now uniquely paid and receive health coverage year-round even though their required baseball-playing activities are only seasonal.

In conclusion, players put in whatever work they deem necessary to achieve their goal of making it to the next level. This practical bill allows them to preserve that opportunity, and therefore I urge a favorable report on **Senate Bill 466**. Thank you.