



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 27, 2025

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1476, which seeks to close a dangerous loophole that allows employers to use immigration status as a tool of intimidation against workers who speak out about labor violations.

Last year, this committee recognized the importance of protecting workers from retaliation and passed HB136, which prohibited employers from taking adverse action against employees for asserting their rights under labor laws. However, in discussions with worker advocates, we identified a serious gap: the law did not explicitly prohibit employers from using immigration status as a means of coercion.

That is why I initially introduced HB1476, which prohibits employers from disclosing or threatening to disclose an employee's immigration status to a public body to conceal violations of wage, benefits, labor, or tax laws. Through further conversations with advocates and the Department of Labor, we realized that the most effective approach would be to amend last year's bill rather than create a standalone statute. This amendment ensures that immigration-related retaliation is addressed under the same enforcement structure as other forms of employer retaliation.

This bill strengthens worker protections by ensuring that no employer can use fear of immigration consequences to silence workers who report: wage theft and other wage law violations, workplace safety hazards, denial of paid sick or family leave, unemployment insurance violations, workers' compensation violations and violations of state labor and tax laws.

The bill empowers the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to investigate violations, with enforcement mechanisms that include mediation as a first step and penalties ranging from \$1,000 for a first offense to \$10,000 for repeat violations.

Importantly, this legislation does not interfere with federal immigration enforcement. It simply ensures that Maryland workers—regardless of immigration status—can assert their rights without fear of intimidation or retaliation.

By passing this bill, we send a clear message: Maryland will not allow bad actors to use immigration status as a weapon to avoid accountability. I appreciate the committee's time and consideration and respectfully request a favorable report on HB1476 with the proposed amendment.