

Good afternoon!

My name is Tamara Zuniga. I was born and raised in District 20, a proud resident of east Silver Spring and Montgomery County. I am a Progressive Maryland member and I am speaking on behalf of the organization in support of SB886 and raising Maryland's minimum wage to a true living wage. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots power-building member-led organization that centers working-class voices in our work to build a more just and equitable Maryland.

I recently graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park, and just like many other college students, I worked multiple jobs through school in order to alleviate some of the financial burden on my parents.

I have the incredible privilege to live at home post graduation. However, like other young graduates, I want to move out of my childhood home, attend graduate school, and start building a life where I can contribute to the community around me. I can't afford to move out of my parent's home and unfortunately, this is a sentiment many of my peers relate to.

I am currently making 17 dollars an hour. That comes to \$2,981.33 a month before taxes. The average rent in Montgomery County is over \$1,500, even just for a studio. This is JUST rent too. How can I afford to start my life in the county I grew up in? I want to stay here because Montgomery County is my home but I don't make enough.

I'm not alone. The people who take care of your elderly parents, who stock shelves in your grocery stores, who pick up your takeout order or who drive your kids' school bus everyday—many of us are earning wages that don't cover the basics in this state. We are not low-skill workers. We are essential workers who have been underpaid for too long

I'm asking this committee to support SB886 and raise Maryland's minimum wage to a true living wage — a wage that reflects what it actually costs to live here. Maryland can afford to do this. Maryland workers cannot afford to wait. Thank you.