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Patrick Moran – President

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**SB 886 – Consumer Protection and Labor and Employment –  
Food Service Facilities and Minimum Wage  
Finance Committee  
March 11th, 2026**

**FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

AFSCME Maryland Council 3, representing approximately 55,000 public service workers across varying levels of government, including city, county, state, and higher education, respectfully submits testimony in support of SB 886.

The cost of living continues to rise in nearly every corner of our state. Housing costs have increased significantly, and in many communities, rent consumes an unsustainable share of a worker's income. Utility bills remain high. Grocery prices have increased. Childcare costs strain family budgets. Healthcare premiums and prescription costs continue to climb. For too many workers, wages simply have not kept pace with these realities.

Families are living paycheck to paycheck. Many have little to no savings to absorb unexpected expenses. A car repair, medical emergency, or sudden rent increase can push a household into financial distress. Parents are working overtime, taking second jobs, or delaying retirement just to meet basic needs. Some rely on credit cards or loans to cover necessities, not luxuries, but food, rent, and utilities.

That is not economic security. That is economic instability.

SB 886 addresses a fundamental principle: one job should be enough.

No Marylander who works full-time should live in poverty. No worker, including tipped workers, should depend on unpredictable wages or public assistance to survive while large corporations report strong profits. Hard work should lead to stability, not a cycle of constant financial stress.

When wages are too low, the consequences extend beyond individual families. Local economies feel the impact. Workers with limited disposable income spend less in their communities, affecting small businesses and slowing economic growth. Employers face higher turnover and increased recruitment and training costs as workers leave in search of better pay. Public assistance programs are strained when working families must turn to them for support.

Conversely, when workers earn fair wages, the benefits ripple outward. Families are better able to save, invest in their children's education, and contribute to their local economies.

Consumer spending increases. Workforce stability improves. Communities become stronger and more resilient.

Fair wages are not simply a worker issue; they are an economic development strategy.

Maryland can be a leader in advancing worker protections and promoting fairness in the workplace. Passing SB 886 would affirm our state's commitment to dignity, equity, and opportunity for all workers.

At its core, this legislation is about ensuring that working families can build stable lives, participate fully in our economy, and look toward the future with confidence rather than uncertainty.

For these reasons, AFSCME Maryland Council 3 respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 886.

