

BILL SB0886
HART for Animals, Inc., Paula Yudelevit, Executive Director
Unfavorable

HART for Animals, a nonprofit, is located in Garrett County, Maryland. We have operated here for since 2009 and currently employ 44 people. I am writing in opposition to SB 886.

I understand the intent of this bill is to raise worker earnings, and I care deeply about my employees. But as a small nonprofit in rural Maryland, this proposal would create economic consequences many businesses and organizations like mine simply cannot absorb — threatening jobs, increasing costs, and undermining stability.

Raising the minimum wage to \$25 per hour by 2030 — a 67% increase — is not a small adjustment. For our organization, that would mean an estimated annual payroll increase of approximately \$750,000. Raising it to \$18 would add \$215,000, which is difficult to absorb. We barely make our budget at the end of the year as we strive to help those in our community. This would essentially put us out of business and jeopardize the welfare of over 40 employees.

What concerns me most is placing this policy into the Maryland Constitution. Embedding it there would effectively lock in sweeping economic mandates, with little ability to course-correct if the consequences prove damaging. That level of permanence is risky for employers, workers, and communities alike.

I am not opposed to fair wages. I am concerned about sustainability — and whether businesses like mine will be able to continue operating and employing Marylanders under this structure.

Our mission to improve the condition of animals in Western Maryland through rescue and transport, accessible spay/neuter surgeries, building and operating a humane animal center, and sheltering and adopting homeless animals is funded by private donations, fundraising, and small grants. Our veterinary clinic performs no-cost and low-cost spay/neuters and emergency care for pets in our low-income households. Since 2009, our clinic has performed 13,072 low and no-cost spay/neuters for pets in our underserved community.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of HART for Animals, we urge you to consider the negative impact on the public service we provide to the region.