



March 5, 2026

Legislative Position: Unfavorable
House Bill 1479
Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Dear Chair Wells and members of the committee:

Founded in 1969, the Howard Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to helping businesses—from sole proprietors to large international firms—grow and succeed. With the power of 700 members that encompass more than 170,000 employees, the Howard County Chamber is an effective partner with elected officials and advocates for the interests of the county's business community.

On behalf of the Howard County Chamber of Commerce, representing hundreds of local employers, I write to express our opposition to **House Bill 1479**. This legislation would impose significant new burdens on small businesses at a time of ongoing economic uncertainty.

HB 1479 proposes additional increases to the State's minimum wage and ties future increases to inflation, creating an automatic escalation of labor costs without legislative review. For small businesses operating on thin margins, this creates serious challenges for long-term planning and financial stability. Rising wage mandates compound existing pressures from rent, insurance, utilities, and supply chain costs.

The bill also redefines what constitutes a "small employer," expanding the threshold and creating a moving target for compliance. This new definition creates confusion for businesses hovering near the employee cutoff as so many other areas of Maryland law use the existing definition.

Wage mandates, particularly those indexed to inflation, often lead to unintended consequences, including reduced hours, delayed hiring, price increases for consumers, and in some cases workforce reductions. Larger employers may be better positioned to absorb or offset these costs, but small, locally owned businesses do not have the same flexibility.

Maryland's small businesses are the backbone of Howard County's economy. Policies that continually raise labor costs while shifting compliance thresholds risk undermining their ability to grow, hire, and invest in our communities.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB 1479.

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon
President & CEO
Howard County Chamber of Commerce