



March 3, 2026

**UNFAVORABLE**

**HB 1479: Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)**

Dear Chair Wells and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

On behalf of the Harford County Chamber of Commerce and the business community we represent in Maryland, we respectfully submit this letter in opposition to HB 1479.

While we appreciate the intent behind HB 1479 recognizing that the cost of living continues to rise for Maryland families, and employers share the concern about ensuring workers can support themselves and their households, mandating an additional increase in the minimum wage at this time will place further financial strain on small and mid-sized businesses already navigating inflationary pressures, higher supply costs, and new regulatory expenses. When operating costs rise beyond what revenues can sustain, businesses are forced to make difficult decisions — including reducing hours, slowing hiring, automating positions, or eliminating jobs altogether. An accelerated wage mandate, particularly in the current economic climate, risks decreasing job opportunities and limiting entry-level employment pathways that many workers rely upon to gain experience and advance.

The proposed automatic tie to inflation in HB1479 creates an unpredictable and unrealistic cost structure for employers. Inflationary trends are often volatile and influenced by national and global factors far beyond the control of local businesses. Indexing new or expanded mandates directly to inflation removes legislative oversight and prevents policymakers from thoughtfully evaluating real-time economic conditions before additional costs are imposed on employers.

For many small and mid-sized businesses in Harford County, financial margins remain tight. Operational expenses—including utilities, insurance, rent, supply chain costs, and wages—have already increased substantially over the past several

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Angela Rose

years. Automatically escalating obligations based on inflation compounds that strain and creates uncertainty in long-term planning, hiring, and capital investment decisions.

Additionally, employers are preparing for the implementation of Maryland's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program, with required employer contributions scheduled to begin in 2027. Businesses are actively budgeting for these new payroll-related expenses, updating administrative systems, and preparing for compliance obligations. Adding further inflation-indexed costs on top of upcoming FAMLI contributions places a disproportionate burden on employers who are already absorbing significant new regulatory and financial requirements.


The Harford County Chamber of Commerce is particularly concerned that layering automatic cost increases onto an already expanding mandate environment will discourage growth, limit workforce expansion, and reduce competitiveness—especially for locally owned small businesses that lack the financial flexibility of larger corporations.

Public policy should provide stability and predictability. If adjustments are warranted in the future, they should be considered deliberately through the legislative process with current economic data, stakeholder input, and a full fiscal analysis. Automatic inflation-based escalators remove that essential policy guardrail.

For these reasons, the Harford County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1479.

Thank you for your consideration of our position and for your continued service to Maryland's business community.

Sincerely,



**Angela M. Rose**  
**President & CEO**  
**Harford County Chamber of Commerce**