



327 Beall St. Cumberland, Maryland 21502
Phone: 301-722-4560 Fax: 301-722-1403
www.rayofhope-md.org

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Wells, Chair
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Bill 1229 – Food Service Facilities and Minimum Wage

Dear Chairwoman Wells and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jenn Dziuk, and I serve as the Executive Director of Ray of Hope, Inc., located in Cumberland, Allegany County Maryland. Our business has proudly operated in Western Maryland for 39 years, employing 80 individuals from around the region.

I am writing to respectfully oppose HB 1229.

Like many employers, I believe in paying fair wages and supporting the employees who make our businesses possible. However, the proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$25 per hour by 2030 represents a significant and rapid increase that would have serious financial consequences for small and mid-sized employers.

For our business, this change would result in:

- A substantial annual increase in payroll expenses of approximately 1.5 million
- Upward pressure on pricing at a time when customers are already managing inflationary costs
- Difficult decisions regarding staffing levels, operating hours, hiring, and future investment

In a rural region like ours, margins are already thin. Unlike larger markets, we do not have the same customer volume to offset dramatic cost increases.

Additionally, wage compression would require adjustments well beyond entry-level positions. To maintain fairness and morale, wages across our entire team would need to increase, compounding the financial impact.

Our location presents another important consideration. Western Maryland businesses operate within close proximity to Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Employers and new entrepreneurs evaluating where to locate or expand have options within a short drive. Significant cost disparities between states could influence future business investment and long-term economic vitality in our region.

Finally, placing this policy in the Maryland Constitution would remove flexibility from future policymakers. Economic conditions change, and locking in a permanent mandate of this magnitude limits the state's ability to respond thoughtfully if unintended consequences arise.

I support policies that strengthen workers and communities. My concern is whether this approach is sustainable for local employers and whether it risks reducing jobs, limiting growth, or discouraging future investment in Western Maryland.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to oppose HB 1229.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Dziuk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jenn Dziuk
Executive Director
Ray of Hope, Inc.
Cumberland, Allegany County, Maryland