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Patrick Moran – President

**HB1229- Consumer Protection and Labor and Employment -Food Service Facilities and Minimum Wage
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
February 26th, 2026**

Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of AFSCME Maryland Council 3, which represents approximately 55,000 public service workers across city, county, state government, and higher education, we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1229.

Our members are the frontline public workers who keep Maryland running every single day. We are correctional officers, child welfare workers, state highway workers, school support professionals, and many others. They protect our most vulnerable residents, maintain critical public infrastructure, and ensure that essential government services function effectively and efficiently. Their work is not optional. It is foundational to the safety, health, and stability of our communities.

Yet even as they perform this essential work, too many working families across Maryland are struggling to remain financially stable.

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

As a result, families are living paycheck to paycheck, often with little or no savings to cushion unexpected expenses. Car repairs, a medical emergency, or a sudden rent increase can quickly 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 short-term loans to cover necessities, not luxuries, but food, rent, and utilities.

That is not economic security. That is economic instability.

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 provide a pathway to stability and opportunity, 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, reduced morale, 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.

Passing HB 1229 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 a favorable report on HB 1229.

