

**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 Wells, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debbie Michaels, and I am the Central Region Vice President for AFSCME Maryland Council 3. I'm also proud to serve as President of AFSCME Local 1459 at UMBC, where I work in administrative support. On behalf of Council 3, I'm honored to stand with you today in support of HB1229.

When I became a state employee, I knew I wouldn't get rich, but I believed it would mean stability, a steady job, and a fair shot at a secure future. But over the years, the reality has been much harder. Low pay and rising costs have made it nearly impossible to keep up. I've fallen behind trying to make ends meet for my family. Like too many working people, I've had to rely on credit cards just to cover basic expenses, and it feels like I'm stuck on a hamster wheel, running faster and faster just to stay in place, trying to dig out before I retire.

Today, one of my paychecks doesn't even cover my rent and utilities. A few years ago, my landlord raised my rent by 25%, and utility costs have skyrocketed. My wages simply haven't kept pace.

I'm supporting HB 1229 because I want a better future, not just for myself, but for my children. My son works for a small construction company. He's doing everything right, working overtime, six days a week, yet he still can't afford health care or his own place to live. His car payment alone makes that impossible. He's working hard, but hard work isn't paying off.

HB 1229 is about making sure that one job is enough. A public servant's salary should be enough to live on.

There is no reason taxpayers should be subsidizing billion-dollar corporations like Walmart and McDonald's because they refuse to pay their workers fairly. It is time for all workers, including tipped workers, to earn a real living wage.

We deserve dignity. We deserve fairness. And we deserve One Fair Wage – for every worker, everywhere.

Thank you for your consideration, and I ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 1229.