



**House Bill 1479**

**Labor and Employment-Minimum Wage-Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)  
In the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee  
Hearing on March 5, 2026  
Position: FAVORABLE**

Maryland Legal Aid respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1479 (HB1479) at the request of Delegate Boaf0.

HB1479 amends Maryland’s minimum wage statute, Md. Code Ann., Labor & Employment § 3-413, to raise the State minimum wage to \$18.00 per hour for large employers by 2028 and for small employers by 2029, and to provide for annual inflation-based adjustments thereafter.<sup>1</sup> This bill represents a measured approach to strengthening economic stability for Maryland’s working families.

Maryland Legal Aid represents low-income workers across the State in eviction, consumer debt, unemployment insurance, workers’ rights and public benefits matters. Our clients are employed in low wage sectors such as retail, hospitality, food service, childcare, warehouse labor, and home health care.

Although Maryland ranks among the wealthiest states in the nation, significant poverty and economic insecurity persist. Approximately 9.1% of Maryland residents, more than 550,000 people, live below the federal poverty line, including over 10% of children.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the federal poverty measure, nearly 39% of Maryland households fall below the ALICE Threshold (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), meaning they earn above poverty level but still cannot afford basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, transportation, and healthcare.<sup>3</sup> Housing instability remains one of the most visible consequences of wage stagnation. Maryland has historically had one of the highest eviction filing rates in the country, with approximately 69 eviction filings for every 100 renter households in certain reporting years.<sup>4</sup> In Baltimore City, the eviction rate has been reported at 5.3% of renter households,

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. 1479, 2026 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2026) (proposing amendments to Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. § 3-413 to increase minimum wage and provide for annual CPI-based adjustments).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts: Maryland (2024), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>.

<sup>3</sup> United for ALICE, *Maryland ALICE Report* (2024), <https://www.unitedforalice.org/maryland>.

<sup>4</sup> Data Collaborative for Justice, *Data Dive on Eviction Data: Maryland* (2018), <https://esal.us/data-dive-on-eviction-data/>.

more than twice the national average, with disproportionate impacts on Black renters and female-headed households.<sup>5</sup> Maryland Legal Aid sees the human consequences of these statistics daily.

Maryland current statutory minimum wage is set forth in Md. Code Ann., Lab & Empl. § 3-413 (West 2026). Although prior increases have improved earnings, inflation has eroded purchasing power, particularly for workers in retail, food service, home health care, and hospitality industries disproportionately employing women and workers of color.<sup>6</sup> HB1479's inflation-indexing provision ensures that gains are not temporary.<sup>7</sup> Without indexing, the real value of the minimum wage declines as consumer prices rise.<sup>8</sup> Consumer price data demonstrate the steady erosion of purchasing power over time.<sup>9</sup> When wages fail to keep pace with rising costs of housing, food, and utilities, Maryland Legal Aid sees predictable downstream consequences reflected in prospective clients' request for representation in eviction filings, consumer debt litigation, reliance on public benefits, and workplace exploitation. By tying future adjustments to a designated consumer price index, the bill prevents recurring cycles of wage stagnation.

For Maryland Legal Aid clients, and all Marylanders, this bill means greater economic security, and greater access to justice. Maryland Legal Aid respectfully urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1479.

If you would like additional information on this bill or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Meaghan McDermott, Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development at [mmcdermott@mdlab.org](mailto:mmcdermott@mdlab.org) or N. Renae Davis, Chief Attorney for Workers' Rights at [ndavis@mdlab.org](mailto:ndavis@mdlab.org).

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<sup>5</sup> Eviction Research Network, Baltimore Evictions Study (2023), <https://evictionresearch.net/maryland/report/baltimore.html>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index-All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/>

<sup>7</sup> H.B. 1479, 2026 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2026) (proposing amendments to Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. § 3-413 to increase minimum wage and provide for annual CPI-based adjustments).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index – All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/>.

<sup>9</sup> Id.