



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 5, 2026

To: House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Opposition of HB1479 - Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I provide written testimony in opposition of HB1479 Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act). While we appreciate the bill sponsors' goals, this legislation would impose significant and unsustainable burdens on Maryland agriculture. HB 1479 raises the state minimum wage to \$18 per hour beginning in 2028, with automatic annual increases thereafter tied to the Consumer Price Index and without any mechanism to suspend increases during economic downturns. These new requirements apply to all employers, including agricultural operations, and would escalate labor costs well beyond the capacity of Maryland's farms to absorb.

Farmers face rising costs across inputs, energy, equipment, and insurance, all while commodity prices remain volatile and often stagnant. Labor is already one of the highest expenses on many farms, particularly on fruit, vegetable and livestock operations that rely heavily on manual labor. The mandatory wage increases envisioned in HB 1479, coupled with permanent automatic annual escalations, would force many family farms to reduce hiring, scale back production, or cease certain labor-intensive crops altogether. For some farms, especially those operating with narrow margins, this bill could be an existential threat.

In addition, the bill's prohibition on suspending wage increases, regardless of economic conditions, creates a rigid framework incompatible with the cyclical nature of agricultural markets. MDFB opposes labor mandates that diminish flexibility and place Maryland farmers at a competitive disadvantage relative to neighboring states. When Maryland labor costs rise faster than regional and national competitors, our producers lose ground, and Maryland loses agricultural jobs. This bill accelerates that imbalance.

Farm Bureau members are committed to providing fair wages, safe conditions, and stable employment for workers. However, policy must balance worker protections with the long-term viability of the farms that provide those jobs. HB 1479 fails to strike that balance. A one-size-fits-all mandate affecting every sector of the economy ignores the unique workforce challenges inherent to agriculture. A more targeted approach that includes agricultural exemptions that would better support both workers and the agricultural economy.



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For these reasons, Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1479. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland's farming community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org with any questions