



February 26, 2026

Legislative Position: Unfavorable
House Bill 1524
Labor and Employment - Paid Leave - Attendance at School Functions
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Dear Chair Wells and members of the committee:

Founded in 1969, the Howard Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to helping businesses—from sole proprietors to large international firms—grow and succeed. With the power of 700 members that encompass more than 170,000 employees, the Howard County Chamber is an effective partner with elected officials and advocates for the interests of the county's business community.

As introduced, we respectfully express concern with House Bill 1524. We share in the desire to support families and promote student engagement; however, we are deeply concerned about the layering on of costs and mandates this would have on small businesses across Maryland.

Under HB 1524, private employers with 15 or more employees would be required to provide each parent with at least 20 hours of paid leave annually to attend school functions. While this appears modest on its face, the cumulative effect of yet another mandated paid leave, coming on top of existing requirements like the State's Family and Medical Leave Insurance program, sick and safe leave, and numerous proposed other paid leave programs, HB 1524 places an increasing administrative and financial burden on small businesses that are already operating under tight margins and resource constraints.

The fiscal note acknowledges that meaningful impacts on small businesses are likely, noting that disruptions to operations and finances may occur because small employers are less able than larger companies to provide coverage for absent employees. Small businesses do not have the flexibility of deep staffing rosters or robust human resources departments, and even limited absences can translate into lost productivity, scheduling difficulties, and increased costs for temporary coverage. Further, this bill does nothing to recognize the many different programs employers already offer of their own accord to provide needed flexibility to their employees.

Adding layer upon layer of mandated paid leave programs, albeit well-intentioned, only amplifies the cost pressures they face and diminishes their capacity to compete, grow, and hire. We respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB 1524.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon
President & CEO
Howard County Chamber of Commerce