

The Honorable Melissa Wells, Chair  
Maryland House of Delegates  
Government, Labor and Elections Committee  
145 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Opposition to [House Bill 1479] – Labor and Employment – Minimum Wage – Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)**

To the Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the almost 1,000 organizational members of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, a leading business advocacy and networking organization located in Frederick County, Maryland. We respectfully oppose HB 1479 because it combines a significant wage increase with permanent automatic escalators that will directly affect the ability of our members to hire and grow. HB 1479 would raise the minimum wage to \$18 per hour by 2028 and then require automatic annual increases tied to inflation, with no authority to pause those increases even during an economic downturn.

For our businesses, this would mean a potentially significant increase in additional payroll costs, directly resulting from the minimum wage increase AND from the mid-range wage compression such a sudden increase would undoubtedly create. To manage that level of mandated cost growth, our members would need to:

- Reduce or delay hiring
- Limit employee hours
- Increase prices
- Postpone planned expansion or investment

These are real tradeoffs. They affect job availability, advancement opportunities and long-term growth in our community.

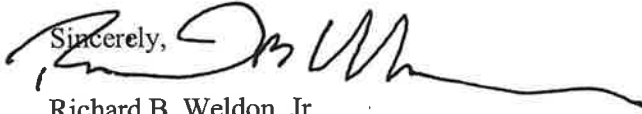
Although the bill provides a one-year delay for some employers, it ultimately locks all covered businesses into permanent automatic increases. When wage increases are mandated year after year without flexibility, employers have fewer options to preserve jobs and create new ones. Over time, that limits entry-level opportunities and slows economic growth.

- We want to pay competitive wages and support our workforce. But policy must balance wage growth with job growth. The Committee needs to understand the difference between minimum wage and livable wage. The ongoing discussions continue correlating minimum wage to a living wage. Minimum wage was never intended to be a “living wage”. It seems the affordability crisis driven in large part by State and local government policies can be cured by increasing minimum wage. This will do the exact opposite once price increases, unemployment, and respective inflation kick in to offset the government mandated minimum wage increases.
- Maryland has increased minimum wage ~40% since 2020. The state has basically doubled minimum wage over the past decade. Increasing “minimum wage” for the sake of increasing minimum wage simply creates inflation which ties directly to affordability. While it might look favorable to “increase minimum wage” all this does in reality is increase prices to everyone resulting in less purchasing power. Said differently, one reason we have the affordability issues

is because of the historical increases in minimum wage. To manage inflation, it's imperative there is productivity to offset the increases. If not, jobs must be eliminated and/or prices must go up to pay for the artificially inflated wages.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 1479.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. B. Weldon, Jr.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard B. Weldon, Jr  
President/CEO  
Frederick County Chamber of Commerce