



**Bill Title:** HB 1229

**Position:** Favorable

**To:** Government Labor Elections

**From:** Erica Puentes

**Date:** February 24, 2026

Chair Bartlett and members of the Government and Labor Elections Committee,

My name is Erica Puentes, I am the Legislative Coordinator for Progressive Maryland.

**Progressive Maryland is in strong support of HB1229.**

We are experiencing a worsening cost of living crisis. Our members feel it when they do their groceries, seek medical care, choose between paying rent and paying for life saving medication.

Meanwhile corporate executives continue to line their pockets with the people's labor. The gap between CEO compensation and worker compensation has never been wider. Marylanders are battling a worsening cost of living crisis and we are calling on state legislators to recognize the plight of the average working Marylander and raise the minimum wage. Raising the minimum wage is about economic justice, racial justice, and gender equity.

When individuals are unable to make ends meet with a single job and are forced to take on two or even three jobs, it means they are working constantly like on Election Day, during legislative sessions, and at nearly every critical moment of civic life. This reality has profound implications for democratic participation: who is able to engage, who is able to be heard, and whose needs and dignity are ultimately placed at risk. In a healthy democracy, no one should be required to sacrifice their voice in order to survive. Our communities deserve the opportunity to rely on one job that pays a living wage.



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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This issue is especially urgent for women of color. Across the United States, Black women and Latina women continue to earn significantly less than white men; even when they possess the same experience, qualifications, and job titles. In industries such as hospitality, Black and Latina women are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage positions, while white men are more frequently placed in higher-paying roles. This occupational segregation directly affects pay, advancement opportunities, and long-term economic security. All of this occurs against the backdrop of a persistent racial wealth gap in the United States. This gap is not incidental, but the result of longstanding structural inequities.

Establishing a true living wage would help level the playing field. It is about compensating workers fairly for their labor. It would reduce inequality across lines of class, race, and gender, while affirming the fundamental dignity of all work. Anyone employed full time should be able to afford a stable and secure life.

For these reasons Progressive Maryland urges a favorable report on **HB 1229**.