



February 19, 2026

Legislative Position: Unfavorable
House Bill 724
Employment Discrimination - Caregiver Status
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.

While we appreciate the intent behind House Bill 724, the Howard County Chamber of Commerce respectfully opposes the bill as currently drafted.

Employers share the goal of ensuring that individuals are not treated unfairly or stereotyped because of their personal circumstances. However, that must be balanced with a businesses ability to make hiring decisions based on a fair and individualized assessment of whether a candidate can perform the essential functions of a position and meet the time and operational requirements of the role.

Every position carries specific expectations, whether related to scheduling, availability, travel, physical presence, or workload demands. Employers are responsible not only for supporting their workforce, but also for meeting customer needs, maintaining productivity, and ensuring the viability of their operations. When a candidate’s availability or time commitment does not align with the documented requirements of a role, employers must be able to consider that reality in their decision-making process.

Adding “caregiver status” as a protected class, without clear parameters, could create uncertainty around legitimate hiring considerations and increase the risk of disputes over routine employment decisions. This may inadvertently discourage open conversations about scheduling expectations and job requirements, conversations that are essential to placing individuals in roles where they can succeed.

Many employers already provide flexible scheduling, remote work options, and family-friendly policies wherever feasible. However, an employer must retain their ability to assess qualifications and availability based on the bona fide needs of a position.

We respectfully urge the Committee to reconsider HB 724. We are happy to work with the sponsor to craft a policy that addresses caregiver discrimination but also carefully balances the practical realities of workforce management.



At this time we encourage an unfavorable report on HB 724.

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon
President & CEO
Howard County Chamber of Commerce