



House Bill 724

Date: February 19, 2026

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Position: Unfavorable

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 724 (HB 724) would add “caregiver status” as a protected characteristic under Maryland’s employment discrimination law using a broad and subjective definition. As drafted, the bill could reasonably be interpreted to include virtually any parent of a minor child, regardless of the nature or extent of caregiving responsibilities. This expansive scope risks transforming a wide range of routine employment decisions into potential discrimination claims, even when those decisions are based on legitimate business needs.

The lack of clear boundaries around caregiver status creates ambiguity for employers attempting to comply in good faith. Employment decisions related to scheduling, attendance, performance expectations, or operational needs could be challenged as discriminatory, forcing employers to defend standard workplace practices. This uncertainty is particularly challenging for small and mid-sized businesses that do not have dedicated legal or human resources staff.

Maryland employers already operate under a comprehensive framework of federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination and provide protections related to family and medical responsibilities. The addition of caregiver status as a protected class risks overlap and confusion with existing requirements, while offering little guidance on how employers should balance caregiving considerations with essential job functions.

While we support the goal of fair and equitable treatment in the workplace and recognize the vital role caregivers play in our communities, we are concerned that HB 724 would create legal uncertainty and unintended consequences for employers without clear evidence that existing law is insufficient. We believe efforts to support working families are best achieved through targeted, flexible policies that assist caregivers without imposing broad, open-ended legal standards or increasing the risk of litigation for Maryland employers.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on HB 724.