

March 3, 2026

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

Dear Chairwoman Wells and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce representing over 330 business, nonprofit and organization members that are the backbone of our local economy, we respectfully submit this letter of opposition to House Bill 1479 - Labor and Employment - Minimum Wage - Increase (Maryland Raise the Wage Act)

We recognize the broader intent of the bill to address cost-of-living pressures for workers. However, the wage schedule and annual CPI indexing present significant concerns for small and mid-sized employers across our region, many of whom are still recovering from inflation-driven cost spikes, labor shortages, and rising input prices.

By mandating sharp wage increases followed by automatic annual adjustments tied to inflation, the bill removes critical flexibility for rural employers. Our local businesses do not operate in the same economic environment as larger Maryland markets, yet they would be subject to the same escalating requirements. Meanwhile, neighboring West Virginia and Pennsylvania are not imposing similar increases, allowing businesses there to maintain more stable pricing. This disparity places rural employers at a clear competitive disadvantage.

The Chamber supports policies that promote workforce opportunities, sustainable business growth, and an environment where jobs can flourish. We urge the Legislature to reconsider the current structure of HB1479 and engage with us to identify solutions that support both workers and employers, including targeted incentives, phased approaches keyed to economic indicators beyond CPI alone, and provisions that safeguard small business viability.

The vitality of Maryland's economy depends on the health of its small businesses. We respectfully request that HB 1479 be amended to include delayed implementation triggers, and flexibility mechanisms that prevent unintended harm to our local employers.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of an unfavorable vote on HB1479.

Sincerely,



Juli McCoy
President & CEO
Allegany County Chamber of Commerce