



Allie Williams, IOM, President & CEO
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1204
Bethesda, MD 20814
T (301) 652-4900 **F** (301) 657-1973
awilliams@greaterbethesdachamber.org
www.greaterbethesdachamber.org

February 9, 2021

Senator Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB486- LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT - EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS DURING AN EMERGENCY (MARYLAND ESSENTIAL WORKERS' PROTECTION ACT)

Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our 500-member businesses (80% have less than 25 employees) and more than 45,000 employees in Montgomery County, this letter is in strong **Opposition** to SB486 - Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act).

This bill proposes to impose numerous damaging mandates on the majority of our members at a time when they are trying to navigate the COVID-19 crisis, keep their businesses in operation and not having to lay off employees. **Most important, this bill doesn't just negatively affect big businesses but will have a devastating effect on small businesses to the point of giving up and just closing down.**

We are extremely concerned about the definitions of emergency, essential employer and essential employee within this bill as they are extremely broad. These definitions also go beyond the scope of "public health emergency" that we are currently experiencing with COVID-19. The impact this bill would have on the majority of businesses throughout the State of Maryland would be devastating. From increasing minimum wages, to paying the employees' unreimbursed health care costs, to bereavement leave, to "14 days of health leave" which doesn't even describe if this is in addition to the employees' sick leave or in place of it. On top of all of these costly expenses, the hazard pay is retroactive back to the start of the emergency. This could basically wipe out any assistance these businesses received from the State, local or federal government agencies due to COVID-19!

Bottom line, this legislation sends the wrong message to businesses – big and small – that the State of Maryland is not focusing on the dire situation the majority of businesses are dealing with right now. They can not afford these changes and the State of Maryland cannot afford the repercussions of its passing.

This is not the year to be focused on creating excessive mandates for our businesses when they can barely stay above water. **We urge the members of the Finance Committee to vote UNFAVORABLE** on this short-sighted bill. Thank you for your consideration of our remarks.

Sincerely,

Allie Williams
President & CEO