

Testimony of Aubrey Batten, Well-Paid Maids in SUPPORT of SB 217 – Labor and Employment – Wage History and Wage Range Before the Maryland Senate Finance Committee, February 13, 2020

Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Aubrey Batten. I am the hiring manager for Well-Paid Maids, a living wage home cleaning company based out of Takoma Park, here in Maryland. We employ 16 full-time cleaners and 3 managerial staff, with plans to double in size this year. Even as a small business, we pay all of our employees a living wage of at least \$17 an hour, provide a comprehensive benefits package, and offer 22 days a year of paid time off.

My company supports this bill. As a Maryland small business, we believe this is the right thing to do for workers and job-seekers, and would be inconsequential to profitability or recruitment.

We do not ask for salary history, and we include a pay rate in all posted job opportunities. Otherwise, a great deal of time would be wasted reviewing applications and engaging with candidates who would never consider working for what we can pay. Because we are so up front about what we pay, I know that I can review applicants for fit and qualifications, not whether we can afford them. This way, I spend less time hiring and have better outcomes.

Employers would not be harmed by this bill. Employers would still be free to negotiate, just on a more level playing field with the candidate since there is transparency around the process. “What do you need to be paid in order to work here?” is an easy enough question to ask.

From a workforce development and modernization standpoint, this bill is beneficial. American society encourages people to educate and train so they have access to better job opportunities. Allowing employers to base wage decisions off a candidate's past sends a clear signal that where you started will always be more important than what you are capable of doing. I believe we are doing Maryland's economy and workforce harm by creating additional barriers to employment.

In addition, as a Marylander, I support this bill because growing up, my family was poor and I could not attend college right out of high school. I worked low wage retail jobs for nine years. I attended community college and transferred to the University of Maryland on scholarship after earning my associate degree, working full-time and attending classes.

My income nearly doubled to \$50,000 the year I earned my bachelor's degree. What if my first white-collar job had based their offer off my pay as a cashier?

Had they based their decision on my salary history instead of how well they thought I could do the work, my lower starting salary would have followed me from job to job, permanently anchoring me to a lower income. Had that happened, I would not be the proud Maryland homeowner and employer I am today. My life would be measurably worse simply because I used to make less money.

One might wonder why I view this as a problem if I wasn't impacted. Well, the job that changed my life was working for the University of Maryland, whose salary information is publicly available and completely transparent. I knew the salary range before I applied.

Ultimately, asking for salary history inadvertently penalizes workers for unfair reasons like taking time to care for a family, for pursuing an education, or for seeking higher pay. Furthermore, based on Well-Paid Maids' experience, not asking for salary history has no discernable impact on the health of a business. Having been in the shoes of many of our applicants, I am grateful that is our policy and I am keen to see it become state law. Thank you.