



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 18, 2021

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 502 - Labor and Employment - Maryland Wage and Hour Law - Agricultural Stands, Retail Farms, and Farmers' Markets**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 502, legislation that establishes an exemption from the Maryland Wage and Hour Law for an individual employed at an agricultural stand, a retail farm, or a farmers' market that primarily sells agricultural products that the farmer has produced. If passed, the minimum wage would be \$10.10/hour.

Most of the employees that fill these seasonal farm market jobs are youth between 16 and 18 years old. In most cases, this is their first job. The cost of labor is a major issue with farm profitability especially when the farmer retains ownership in their crop and looks to retail it to the consumer. Even at a retail price, margins are very small. Increasing the minimum wage 33% prevents a farmer from offering youth opportunities to have their first job at their operation. This bill would allow the farmer to offer those beginning jobs without a massive increase in labor costs.

MDFB Policy: We support maximum opportunities for youth to work on farms. We believe youth gain important life skills, learn safety around animals and equipment, benefit from involvement in programs like 4-H and FFA, become interested in careers in agriculture, better understand that farmers are professionals and use best management practices, and establish a strong work ethic. Therefore, we urge government not to limit these opportunities.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 502 AND ENCOURAGE A FAVORABLE REPORT

Colby Ferguson

Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396