



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Testimony in Support of Maryland SB 721
Labor and Employment - State Minimum Wage Rate - Acceleration
(Fight for Fifteen)**

TO: Sen. Kelley, Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Jennifer Dwyer, Director of Policy and Development, Progressive Maryland
DATE: March 10, 2022
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 721. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters. They live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our **strong support for SB 721**.

\$30,000 a year. That is how much a 40 hour work week with a wage of \$15.00 per hour amounts to before taxes. Cost of living studies has found that Maryland is the seventh most expensive state in the nation for standard necessities such as groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, and health. Not only is the cost of living already exorbitant, but the inflation rate is the highest it's been in 40 years. These factors mean that the acceleration of a living wage is imperative to support our state's vulnerable and hard-working people.

Nowhere in the entire State of Maryland can a person be self-supporting on a wage lower than \$15.00 an hour, according to a study by Maryland Community Action Partnership. As of now, the minimum wage will not reach \$15.00 per hour until 2026 for all minimum wage workers in Maryland. SB 721 would mean that all minimum wage workers will meet the \$15.00 per hour needed to survive by 2023 instead of 2026. This will have a massive impact on the lives of close to 1 million workers in the state who currently and will continue to make less than \$15.00 an hour until 2026. The economic reality and hardship are so blatantly apparent to residents that the majority of Marylanders support the acceleration of raising the minimum wage to \$15.00.

Maryland workers deserve better than to continue working in excess of forty hours per week just to meet their most basic needs. For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on SB 721**.

