



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Testimony in Support of Maryland House Bill: HB549 Fair Wage Act of 2023

TO: House Speaker Jones, and members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Larry Stafford, Jr., Executive Director, Progressive Maryland
DATE: February 23, 2023
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB549. 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 HB549.**

Maryland's current minimum wage of \$13.25 per hour translates to only \$27,560 per year for a full-time worker. Numerous cost of living studies have found that Maryland is one of the most expensive state in the nation for basic necessities such as groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, and health, and now the burden of such a high cost of living is being exacerbated by an inflation rate that's the highest it's been in 40 years. **These factors make the acceleration of the \$15 per hour minimum wage imperative to support our state's most vulnerable 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. HB549 would mean that all minimum wage workers will be paid \$15.00 per hour 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 unless the General Assembly takes action. 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.**


We also need to ensure that the minimum wage is indexed to inflation and passing this bill would do that. Indexing the minimum wage to inflation is an important part of worker protection because it ensures that wages stay up with the cost of living. If the minimum wage is not indexed to inflation, low income workers may not be able to afford basic necessities as the cost of living increases. Indexing wages to inflation also helps businesses plan and budget



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without having to worry about sudden changes in labor costs due to unanticipated increases in the cost of living.

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 HB549.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Larry Stafford, Jr.