



SEIU Maryland & DC State Council

1410 Bush Street, Suite F
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Testimony in **FAVOR** of **HB 549** **The Fair Wage Act of 2023**

House Economic Matters Committee
February 27, 2023
1:00 PM

Presented by: Terry Cavanagh, Executive Director

We urge a **FAVORABLE Report on HB 549**

Eight years ago SEIU kicked off a national campaign to raise wages for millions of low paid workers. We called it **"Fight For \$15 and a Union"**. Since then, city after city, and state after state, including Maryland, have passed laws setting their minimum wage at \$15 an hour sometime in the future.

This bill recognizes the financial reality that workers in Maryland face today, will face next year and beyond.

We applaud Governor Moore and leaders in the House and Senate who are putting their support behind this bill. Accelerating the schedule to get to \$15 is important. Including a provision that indexing future increases to inflation is also important. Way too often low-wage workers fall further and further behind due to lack of political commitment or courage to keep their wages in step with the ever-rising costs they face.

Is this bill a panacea? By no means. If anyone thinks \$15.00 an hour is enough to provide food, clothing, shelter and the other costs workers face, they should try to do it themselves.

Are there groups and classifications of workers we would have liked to see included in this bill? Absolutely!

Tipped workers are being left behind. There is separate legislation addressing their issue, which we support and urge you to support.

Agricultural workers have been left behind. We should ask ourselves why? Is it because of who has traditionally done this work? Is it our fear that somehow the cost of our food will rise so high that no one will buy it? This too should be addressed in separate legislation.

Domestic workers have been left behind. Why? Is it because of who has traditionally done this work? We urge you to take a closer look at these workers, their wages and why they are excluded.

Though not perfect, this bill is good legislation and deserves support from across the state and across the political spectrum.

Thank you.

We ask a **FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB 549.**