

Sayers, Margery

From: Glenn Schneider <GSchneider@thehorizonfoundation.org>
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 8:07 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony on CB82-2021
Attachments: CB82-201_Minimum Wage Testimony_FINAL.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Council Members:

Attached is the Horizon Foundation's testimony in support of CB82-2021, the minimum wage bill.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Glenn

Glenn E. Schneider

Chief Program Officer, Horizon Foundation
Office: 443-766-1217 | Mobile: 443-812-6955
gschneider@thehorizonfoundation.org



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December 6, 2021

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The Honorable Liz Walsh, Chair
Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Chairwoman Walsh and Members of the County Council:

BILL: CB82-2021 AN ACT establishing minimum wage for employees
working in Howard County
Position: **SUPPORT**

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

The Horizon Foundation supports CB82-2021 for many reasons, including:

1. **CB82-2021 will advance racial equity in Howard County.** The Maryland Center on Economic Policy estimates that increasing the county's minimum wage will result in a substantial wage increase for 33% of Black workers, 51% of Hispanic workers, 25% of Asian and Pacific Islander workers and 75% of workers in low-income families in Howard County. Further, increasing the minimum wage is just one of many important policy levers recommended by the County Council's Racial Equity Taskforce to close equity gaps.
2. **CB82-2021 will reduce poverty in Howard County and thereby improve health.** The Association of Community Service's 2020 Self-Sufficiency report states that nearly 20% of households in Howard County make less than what it takes to sustainably live here. In 2020, there was a 14% increase in the percentage of people living in poverty (about \$22,000 for a family of three). And many of the workers who would receive a pay boost are those working in frontline jobs with the greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, economic stability is a social determinant of health – a factor that is necessary for good health in our community. Raising the wage will provide better economic stability for 40,000 Howard County

workers and contribute to a healthier environment for more of our residents. For example, setting a higher standard for Howard County’s minimum wage will help Howard County workers access higher quality health care, child care, housing, and education opportunities all of which will improve their overall health and wellbeing.

3. **CB82-2021 will fuel economic growth.** Study after study shows that raising the minimum wage does not hurt employment, lessens families’ need for government assistance, and provides additional revenue for lower-income individuals to support themselves – money that ultimately will be reinvested in the local economy.

Howard County has an opportunity to advance racial equity, reduce poverty, better economic stability, fuel economic growth and improve health – all by passing CB82-2021.

The Board of Trustees of the Horizon Foundation urges you to pass this bill and improve the health and lives of Howard County residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nikki Highsmith Vernick
President and CEO

Sayers, Margery

From: David Liker <dave@gormanfarmscsa.com>
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 3:46 PM
To: CouncilMail; Council and Staff
Subject: exempt agriculture from minimum wage

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing today to encourage you to exempt the agricultural industry from the minimum wage increase bill that you are currently considering. This legislation has the potential to create many unintended challenges for our family farms in Howard County, and could create a competitive disadvantage for our farmers on top of other challenges we all face on a daily basis.

My name is Dave Liker, and along with my wife and family, operate Gorman Farms which is located in District 3 & 4. We are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation, providing high quality locally grown food to several hundred Howard County residents and families each season for the past 13 years. Between our two CSA programs in 2021 we had over 1000 memberships that are receiving copious amount of high quality organically raised produce each week. This is different than selecting a few few items at a farm store now and then. I feel this level of service is a significant contribution to the health and well being of our community. I know this because my customers tell me this on a very regular basis. They also wait in line, sometimes for a few years to get into our program because the demand is strong. Some of you may remember my operation from the Fall Agriculture and Conservation Tour hosted in October by the Howard Soil Conservation District and others.

We are very passionate about providing the most nutritious, healthy, and high quality food to our neighbors at a reasonable price. We also go over and above to take good care of the land and give back to the community through a variety of food donation programs. But let me be blunt...if I cannot run my business profitably it will not last. Labor costs are *THE* major factor in determining whether or not my farm operation, or any other farm operation is profitable. And because of this issue I already work more hours in a week than is realistic for a normal human being with a family. If I have to pay entry level workers \$15+ an hour, there will be no profits, there will be no nutritious fresh food for a 1000 + members annually, there will be NO jobs for the many people we employ now and plan to employ going forward. We are barely getting by as is, raising minimum wage is devastating to agriculture operations in this community.

This is true of most agricultural operations in Howard County. And whether they dissolve, or move to another county where labor is more affordable, or just hire less people and put the burden of the work on fewer employees...the result is the same – a disincentive to try to make an ag operation work in Howard County. Everyone in the agricultural industry wants to pay their workers a fair rate for the work they do...but many of the jobs in our industry are unique, and only a farm operator knows what they can afford to pay for this type of work and still remain profitable. That decision need to remain with our farmers if Howard County is to remain friendly to family farms.

Farmers have to juggle a variety of extraordinary challenges that are out of their control...trying to pay a county mandated minimum wage and remain competitive with our competition in surrounding counties who do not have these inflated labor costs should not be added to our lists of concerns. Many of my employees may make \$15/hour already, but there is a necessary process in place to incentivize moving to that level, which strikes a

balance between the remedial field work we need to get done and our ability to sell food at a price people can afford.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this topic and please support agriculture in Howard County by supporting Council member Yungmann's amendment to EXEMPT AGRICULTURE from the minimum wage legislation.

Sincerely,

Dave Liker
301-957-6884
www.gormanfarmscsa.com



Sayers, Margery

From: John Dove <lovedovefarms@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 1:47 PM
To: Council and Staff; CouncilMail
Subject: Ag exemption to minimum wage

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing today to encourage you to exempt the agricultural industry from the minimum wage increase bill that you are currently considering.

This should not be an issue, this is what the state has done and various other jurisdictions have done – maintaining the AG state exemption.

My name is John Dove, and along with my wife and family, we own Love Dove Farms. I currently serve on the Howard County Farm Bureau, and the Howard Soil Conservation Board. This legislation has the potential to create many unintended challenges for family farms in Howard County. Although we have stepped back from our operation on a daily basis, we fully understand the implications that something like this would have on the agricultural community. Having sold vegetables at local farmers markets, the increase in costs on our producers would have to be passed onto our customers to stay in business. But please keep in mind that the margins are already thin and consider the community at large and the cost of local goods at a local farmers market. If those costs increased, it would inevitably restrict access to lower income as well as dissuade customers from coming to our markets. Instead those dollars will be spent at big box grocery stores that do not support our local agriculture community.

Our industry is unique in the cost of labor being so intensive in our local Ag community, we already pay our workers a fair rate for the work they do. However we can not pay everyone the same base rate, in a labor intensive field of work, we need to encourage hard work and productivity. That is why we pay people at different rates based on their commitment, dedication and hard work. Labor costs are a major factor in determining whether or not a farm operation is sustainable and hopefully profitable and only a farm operator knows what they can afford to pay for this type of work and still remain profitable.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this topic and please support agriculture in Howard County by supporting Councilmember Yungmann's amendment to EXEMPT AGRICULTURE from the minimum wage legislation.

Thank You!

John Dove

Love Dove Farms

443-690-1642

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John Dove
Love Dove Farms

john@lovedovefarms.com

(443)-690-1642

www.lovedovefarms.com

www.facebook.com/lovedovefarms

Sayers, Margery

From: Plummer, David
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 11:54 AM
To: CouncilMail; Council and Staff
Cc: Justin Brendel; John@lovedovefarms.com; Nora Crist; Charles F. Schuster; jg.warfield@yahoo.com; Abby Gibbon
Subject: CB-82, Howard County minimum wage bill

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing today on behalf of the Howard Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors, to express their deep concern regarding the County's minimum wage legislation and the considerable unintended consequences this bill could have on family farms in Howard County. Our Board of Supervisors is composed of a broad spectrum of agricultural industry representatives from across the county. Our members represent the equine industry, fruit and vegetable growers, traditional grain operations, agritourism, beef production, and the horticultural industry. Although they all come from different backgrounds and have very different operations, one challenge they all face is finding affordable labor to keep our farms viable. By passing this minimum wage bill in Howard County, without providing the exemption for agricultural operations that is contained in both the State minimum wage law and most surrounding jurisdictions minimum wage legislation, you will be creating a considerable disadvantage for Howard County farmers versus their counterparts in surrounding counties. Please consider the following:

- Farmers are price takers, and cannot raise the price of the items they sell to pass on government imposed minimum wage increases like other industries can. A farmer cannot get more for a bushel of corn or a bale of hay than what the market will pay. And while some portions of the ag industry may be able to raise their rates (higher price for vegetables, charging a higher price for horse boarding, etc.)...those business will not be around long when clients learn that they can go to any of our surrounding counties (where minimum wage increases have not been imposed on agriculture) and find these items at a reduced rate.
- Producing food is very labor intensive and has very thin margins to stay competitive. If we truly want locally grown food, and we want to eliminate food deserts and the other challenges we see with distribution of healthy and nutritious food, we cannot add the additional burden of this minimum wage bill to our producers when their counterparts everywhere else in the state do not have the increased labor costs, and can sell items at a discount to our farmers.
- People work in the agricultural industry for a variety of reasons, and money is not always the driving factor. Many college students and young adults want hands on experience and the chance to work outdoors. They are often building experience for a future career in soil science, veterinarian medicine, natural resources, food distribution, or agriculture in general. By forcing farmers to increase their labor costs per hour they will not be able to afford to hire these entry level people seeking a broad work experience before pursuing other careers.
- This minimum wage increase may create a disincentive for ag operations to move to Howard County. While many of you have asked questions about why we don't have more agritourism, wineries, breweries, etc.... if you force this minimum wage on farmers you will no longer need to ask that question. Imposing this minimum wage increase on new ag operations that need labor to get their operations up and running will surely push these and other ag operations to look at surrounding counties where they can afford to hire people and make a profit off their operations.
- Farming is a fragile industry, plagued by a variety of factors out of an operator's control – weather, commodity prices, insects/diseases, and numerous input costs that fluctuate constantly. It is not easy to make a living farming and growing food, and many farmers barely make a living. This is part of the reason so few people are willing to go into farming, including the next generation of farm family members. If we truly want productive farms and local food production, we cannot impose these increased labor costs on our farm operators when farmers in surrounding counties are not subject to these increased costs.

- Farmers already have to pay a competitive wage in order to attract labor from surrounding areas and other more lucrative lines of work. Forcing an increased minimum wage on them will surely put some operations out of business (i.e. the juice won't be worth the squeezing!).
- THERE IS A REASON THAT THE STATE AND OTHER JURISDICTIONS HAVE SPECIFICALLY EXEMPTED THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY FROM MINIMUM WAGE REQUIREMENTS – BECAUSE THEY RECOGNIZE ALL OF THE ABOVE AND OTHER CHALLENGES THESE BILLS CREATE FOR FAMILY FARMS!!!

We hope that all of you will consider supporting Councilmember David Yungmann's amendment to EXEMPT agriculture from this bill! If you have any questions or would like to speak personally to any of our Board Members about this issue please let us know. Thank you for supporting the continued viability of agriculture in Howard County! Regards – David

David C. Plummer, District Manager
Howard Soil Conservation District
14735 Frederick Road
Cooksville, MD 21723
410-313-0680; www.howardscd.org

Sayers, Margery

From: Jason Booms <jasonabooms@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 26, 2021 3:29 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: CB82-2021

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Kindly vote YES on CB82-2021 and raise the minimum wage in Howard County!

Thank you,

Jason Booms
County Council District #4

Sayers, Margery

From: Bonnie Bricker <bonbricker@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 26, 2021 3:13 PM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: info@livingwagehoco.org
Subject: Please pass CB82-2021 to raise the minimum wage in Howard County!

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing to urge you to VOTE YES on CB82-2021 and raise the minimum wage in Howard County.

You are aware of the struggle; you are aware that with a labor shortage in many sectors, many workers have already fled to jobs that allow for a fairer wage. Let's ensure that our residents can be housed and fed. Let's raise the minimum wage and ensure that basic needs are met.

Other Maryland counties have already raised their minimum wage beyond the state-mandated minimum, and Howard County should follow suit. I urge you to pass CB82-2021 without delay to provide essential support for Howard County residents.

It's time to move Howard County closer to ensuring a living wage for all workers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Bricker
District 1
Elkridge, MD

Sayers, Margery

From: Jung, Deb
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 9:16 AM
To: Sayers, Margery
Subject: Fw: Minimum Wage Increase

Testimony

From: 4hirsch2@gmail.com <4hirsch2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 8:39 AM
To: Jung, Deb <djung@howardcountymd.gov>
Subject: Minimum Wage Increase

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Deb,

Writing to ask you to vote NO on raising the minimum wage higher than the State level for Howard County. It makes no sense to go faster and higher, with less regulations than Governor's Hogan's plan. People don't realize that Econ 101 teaches that our businesses will lose employees as they'll be less able to pay them and that their product prices will increase - directly impacting the HoCo consumer. Voting yes on such a bill will ultimately drive consumer and business owners to go elsewhere, outside of Howard County. Progressive Democrats are going to ruin our great County!

Regards,
B. Hirsch

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Sayers, Margery

From: Cathy Hudson <cmhudson@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 9:05 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Fwd: CB-82

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

I have not seen my correspondence posted on the council current legislation website and am resending in case it was not received.

Thank you,
Cathy

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Cathy Hudson <cmhudson@comcast.net>
Date: Wed, Nov 17, 2021 at 9:21 AM
Subject: CB-82
To: <councilmail@howardcountymd.gov>, Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>

I have struggled and agonized over this legislation for the last month. I truly want folks who work so hard to earn a living wage. I really don't like the way upper management salaries have soared while rank and file employees' wages have stagnated. At the same time, this legislation is looking at a systemic problem and applying a small, piecemeal attempt at a solution that will have many unintended consequences.

One assumption that is being made is that money is the most important benefit that employees are looking for. While important, what I am hearing is that many also want a more flexible schedule or that they don't want to have to work long hours or that they don't want a long commute. As a farm employer, because I can hire more people, I have the coverage to give my employees that flexible schedule as well as to not overwork them. They also enjoy the comradery of working with multiple people and not by themselves. If I am mandated to raise wages significantly, then I lose my ability to better meet the needs/wants of my employees in creative ways.

As I have struggled with this issue, I have thought about 2 businesses that I am familiar with that have what I would call essential products and employees, that are childcare providers and farmers.

Childcare centers have struggled mightily during this pandemic. In the 2019 Maryland Child Care Market Rate Survey Report¹ it notes, "The provider's full rate, however, is usually determined by what parents can afford to pay, and not by what it costs the provider to provide high quality child care." And the majority of the costs come from salaries. In 2019 the survey noted that the average weekly cost for an infant in a child care center was about \$400. That infant requires a 1:2 ratio, so that for every \$1 increase in salary that could translate to an extra \$25/week cost. (assuming a 10 hr day for the infant) or \$1300/yr. That weekly cost would go down as the infant gets older and the mandated teacher/student ratio relaxes, but it also doesn't take into consideration salary adjustments for other non teacher staff as well. So whereas this bill might "only" add an extra dollar to the \$5 increase to employee salaries over 4 years, it will add additional stress to already stressed childcare centers, who may or may not be able to stay in business, and or parents-who will either decide that they can pay the additional amount, or will drop out of the workforce or look for alternative care. It will also give an advantage to in-home childcare providers who don't have employees. All are consequences that you need to consider.

As to farmers, most don't make minimum wage at least as far as it is from their growing of food. Yet it is to their benefit (physical and mental) to have some help around the farm. Many, myself included, hire young teenagers-high school and college-aged students seasonally. I look at it as job training, learning life skills, and mentoring as much as it is helping me to grow good food. For most it is their first job. But who is going to pay for the food that I grow if I have to charge how much it costs me to grow it and pay these increasing wages? Especially since they can go several minutes and get a similar product from a farmer in nearby Baltimore or Anne Arundel counties who don't have these overhead costs? And as I stated above, these students aren't looking for lots of money as much as they are looking for real work that they feel has purpose and where they can learn so many things. But they also want that week off to take maybe their last family vacation before adulting. They want to work as a group, not by themselves. They want a job that is close by. That is the kind of sanity and benefits that I want to offer my employees. However, this bill, by only focusing on wages will limit my ability to offer them these options and I will be forced to cut back on the number of employees. This will be another nail in the coffin of local food production.

Also having the automatic rate adjustment geared to the consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers leaves me no hope for the future of local agriculture (as well as many other industries) as we will become less and less competitive with surrounding counties. Likewise, there is no provision for a decrease, so wages can only go up leaving no flexibility in economic downturns.

So my request would be to not have just Howard Co further increase our minimum wage, but watch and study the continuing increase in the statewide minimum wage. That is a significant increase already coming and there will be consequences from that-let's look at what they are and then further act as warranted.

If it is implemented, do it along with carve outs for seasonal employees or young workers, while also looking at ways to encourage employers to employ young workers in their community. And do away with the automatic rate adjustment that can only go up and that gives businesses a huge planning unknown.

1. https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/2/market_rate_survey_final_report_july_2019_sr_07_08_19_pm_final_pdf_3.pdf

Thank you,

Cathy Hudson

Myrtle Woods Farm

Elkridge, Md 21075

Sayers, Margery

From: LINDA KATZ <ELSELK@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 3:46 PM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: Ball, Calvin
Subject: Additional Minimum Wage Legislation is not Required in Howard County:

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Howard County Council:

Additional Minimum Wage Legislation is not Required in Howard County.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation to raise the statewide minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025.

The proposed Howard County legislation (CB82-2021) would gradually raise Howard County's minimum wage from its current rate of \$11.75 per hour to \$16 per hour over the next several years. This raise of the minimum wage would be for both county government staff and all Howard County employees.

Several years is not a specific manageable period!

Mandating private employers in Howard County pay higher labor rates would add costs, especially to small business owners, causing these businesses to lay off workers to remain competitive. Also starting a small business in Howard County would be discouraged and start-ups would go elsewhere.

Please vote against the proposed Howard County Minimum Wage Legislation (CB82-2021)!

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Sayers, Margery

From: Jill Christianson <jchristianson@beluminus.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 1:46 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony CB 82-2021
Attachments: HoCo Council MinWage 11-15-21.docx

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello County Council and staff,

Please find attached testimony for CB 82-2021.

Thank you,



Jill Christianson (she,her,ella)
Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Luminus Network for New Americans (formerly FIRN)
5999 Harpers Farm Road • Suite E-200
Columbia, Maryland 21044

Cell 443-844-7768
Email jchristianson@beluminus.org
Web www.beluminus.org

Testimony
Howard County Council
Council Bill 82-2021
From
Luminus Network for New Americans

Bill 82-2021 Introduced by Opel Jones and Christiana Rigby –

AN ACT establishing a local minimum wage for employees working in Howard County; and generally relating to Howard County minimum wage requirements.

I am Jill Christianson, from Luminus Network for New Americans, formerly FIRN.

I speak in favor of CB 82-2021.

When considering the American Dream, many of our minds conjure up images of freedom and equality of opportunity, but sometimes we disregard that some in our community cannot afford the same luxury. As Luminus Network for New Americans, a nonprofit dedicated to aiding immigrants who settle in Howard County, it is essential that we take actions to ensure equal opportunity which includes equitable access to secure jobs and well-being.

We thank the Howard County Council for considering raising the minimum wage which impacts the stability and security of county residents and their families, including the new Americans served by Luminus. We ardently support CB 82-2021, which seeks to raise the minimum wage in the County to \$16 per hour.

Currently, less-than-living wages barely equip workers with the means to scrape by in Howard County and beyond. Howard County's current minimum wage of \$11.75 is less than half of the \$25.81 living wage¹ established for a working single adult with no children, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator. By raising the minimum wage in Howard County to \$16 per hour, in stepped increments depending on the employer, Howard County will be making important progress towards living wage.

Let's define Living Wage, so that there is clarity –

The living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs. It is a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities (e.g. clothing, personal care items, etc.) costs... The living wage is the minimum income standard that, if met, draws a very fine line between the financial independence of the working poor and the need to seek out public assistance or suffer consistent and severe housing and food insecurity. In light of this fact, the living wage is perhaps better defined as a minimum subsistence wage for persons living in the United States.²

¹ Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Living Wage for Howard County MD, <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/24027>

² MIT, Living Wage Definition, <https://livingwage.mit.edu/pages/about>

As we begin recovery from the pandemic, our low-income workers are in dire financial circumstances, and I implore you to give them your attention. Raising the minimum wage will encourage families to invest more into local businesses, and the increased profits will allow managers to hire workers, thus providing new job opportunities in our county.

When we strengthen the minimum wage, we not only strengthen our economy but the livelihoods of workers of color– 30% of African American workers’ wages would rise, as well as 51% of Latino workers wages would rise, with 36% of all workers of color seeing a rise in income.

As we pay families a living wage, we secure food and housing, we allow them to invest in their futures, and we raise the likelihood of their children pursuing education. By raising our minimum wage, Howard County offers families the best chance at achieving their American dreams.

We commend the Council for deliberating upon this measure to increase the minimum wage, and we strongly encourage the passing of CB 82-2021.