

*Mid Atlantic Pipe Trades Association*



Maryland Senate – Finance Committee

**TO:** Senator Delores Kelly, Chair; Senator Brian Feldman, Vice Chair; and Member of the Senate Finance Committee

**FROM:** Jason Ascher, Political Director – Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

**Support SB 280 – Labor and Employment – Payment of Wages – Minimum Wage and Enforcement**

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association and its over seven thousand members from the United Association Locals across the state, I ask that you SUPPORT SB 280.

To start with, almost all United Association Locals in Maryland start first-year apprentices at over \$15 per hour, plus the fringe benefits of being a member of the local union, such as health insurance and retirement savings. Along with small increases during their five years as an apprentice they all increase to over \$30 per hour, plus the same fringe benefits, after apprentice training is complete. We fight for this for our members because we understand the need for them, as well all workers to earn a wage that allows them to take care of their family and enjoy life. Workers need to do things like paying rent or a mortgage, putting food on the table, take care of any medical emergencies or medication needs, and being able to put money away so they can retire with dignity.

Increasing the minimum wage is vital to improving economic equality across Maryland. Workers earning \$15 per hour with a 40-hour work week earn up to \$31,200 per year. This wage is significantly better than the approximately \$21,000 per year they could earn at \$10.10 per hour. This wage will not only allow them to more easily pay the bill necessary to take care of their families but will leave them with more disposable income to spend in their community. This increase in the minimum wage will have the effect of helping to bring new customers to small businesses and helping to grow the local economy. Increasing wages has proven to have the amazing impact of increased spending, which should allow business owners to increase profits while at the same time increasing the salaries they pay to their workers.

Another benefit of raising the minimum wage would be the decrease in the need to use public assistance to get by. At the current minimum wage, people are working two or more jobs to make enough to barely pay their bills. Because of this they also rely on public assistance to make sure they can put food on the table, put a roof over their family's head, and take care of the medical needs of them and their families. We should be fighting to not end public assistance, but get rid of the need for it, by making sure all workers putting in a full day's work, earn a wage that reflects that, regardless of what type of work it is. \$15 per hour is a significant step in the right direction to achieving that goal.

For all of the reasons discussed, I ask that you SUPPORT SB 280.

Sincerely,

Jason Ascher

Political Director

Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

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