On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 600 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our support of **HB 508 – COVID-19 – Civil Immunity**.

HB 508 provides that businesses, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities that act in compliance with all federal, state, and local statutes, rules, regulations, executive and agency orders related to COVID-19 shall be held immune from civil liability for a COVID-19 claim unless gross negligence or intentional wrongdoing can be proven.

As if the pandemic and the economic downturn were not enough, employers are confronting the possibility of unwarranted lawsuits related to COVID that threaten their ability to operate and the economy’s ability to recover. Temporary and targeted liability relief must be enacted to provide employers, healthcare providers, non-profits, and educational institutions a safe harbor from these types of lawsuits when they make good-faith efforts to follow applicable public health guidelines.

This is a critical issue for a wide range of employers from distillers who switched to producing hand sanitizers, to manufacturers that transformed their operations to construct personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators, to front line medical professionals treating the afflicted, to pharmaceutical companies that are expediting research into cures, to essential businesses that remained open, to colleges and schools, to businesses. A safe-harbor will ensure that bad actors can be held accountable while simultaneously protecting those entities who make a good faith effort to follow public health guidance.

The Maryland General Assembly must enact liability protections for the duration of the pandemic and as the crisis subsides to resume commerce without the fear of frivolous lawsuits.

The Chamber respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 508**.

Sincerely,

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