



Progressive Cheverly – Democracy from the Ground Up

9 Cheverly Circle
Cheverly, MD 20785

Written Testimony to the Economic Matters Committee
February 20, 2007

On behalf of the members of Progressive Cheverly, we offer the following written testimony in **support for Living Wage legislation (HB 430)**. We are pleased that **Delegates Ivey, Niemann and Ramirez** from the 47th District who represent us are co-sponsors.

Progressive Cheverly is based in Cheverly, Prince George's County. We are working to revitalize democratic politics at the grassroots, especially in the commitment to the values addressed in our mission statement: “to promote economic fairness, social justice, basic human rights, civil liberties, a sustainable environment, a tolerant society and world peace through a more informed political dialogue and active participation in civil society and the democratic political process.”

Located in Cheverly, we recognize the vital importance of this legislation to our community and our region. We observe how private companies who are beneficiaries of generous state procurement contracts have failed to provide a living wage to the workers in our community and region where a working family needs to make an income of more than 40 thousand dollars per year to minimally sustain the family and afford the basic conditions of life – food, housing, clothing, transportation and medical care.

While many might perceive the town of Cheverly as a being populated by those who can afford the comforts as well as the basics of life, this is clearly not the case for all of our neighbors. The most recent U.S. Census data reflects that 636 households in Cheverly earn less than 40 thousand dollars a year. That represents almost 30% of our neighbors. Moreover, almost a third of those households (95 of 636) earn less than 20 thousand dollars a year, and many are single-parent families headed by an unmarried woman.

In the end, the community as a whole is affected by low wages. When workers don't earn a living wage, the community and citizens of the region as a whole end up paying for it through health care, food and other subsidies for low-income residents. Greater burdens are placed on institutions such as the Prince George's Hospital Center and through outlays to our social welfare system that is taxpayer supported.

The living wage legislation is a step in the right direction, since it requires employers that hold or gain state contracts to pay a just, living wage. This is especially important for those that employ workers who have what are considered to be – but sometimes are not – low skill jobs.

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