

Jul 16, 2026

Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture

Labor, Education, & Development Subcommittee

July 16, 2026

Virtual - Google Meet

Invited: Garry Aime -MEA- Leslie SessomParks -MSDE-
Joseph Milone -COMMERCE- Rachel R Jones -MDA- Harrison B Palmer -MDA-
Anupa Geevarghese -LABOR- Cristina Campbell -LABOR-
Ellamarie Missah -LABOR- Regan Vaughan -LABOR- emarfomissah@loyola.edu
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Lauren Moses -MDA-

Agenda:  Labor, Education and Development Subcommittee Agenda 7.16.2026.docx

Recording:  GICA Subcommittee- Labor, Education, and Development - 2026_07_...

Summary

Committee members approved minutes and discussed apprenticeship coordination, Family and Medical Leave Insurance implementation, and heat regulations.

Administrative Approvals and Planning

Subcommittee members approved the previous meeting minutes. Agencies initiated coordination efforts regarding future apprenticeship pathways.

Leave and Safety Compliance

Officials clarified Family and Medical Leave Insurance contribution requirements and exemptions for small employers. Agricultural stakeholders debated the operational feasibility of new heat stress safety standards.

Agricultural Support Measures

State agencies are modeling tax credit impacts and implementing relief strategies for crop losses. Efforts are underway to expand support to cover additional agricultural products.

Decisions

Needs Further Discussion

- **H2A worker program eligibility** Representatives agreed to initiate an offline discussion regarding potential regulatory or legislative modifications for H2A workers under the state's paid family and medical leave program.

Aligned

- **November meeting minutes approval** The subcommittee formally approved the minutes from the meeting held in November.
- **Apprenticeship reporting strategy coordination** MDA and the Department of Labor established an agreement to coordinate on developing an apprenticeship pathway for the agricultural industry to meet upcoming December 1st report requirements.
- **Agriculture-specific family leave webinar** The Department of Labor committed to hosting a targeted, industry-specific webinar regarding paid family and medical leave for agricultural stakeholders in late October or early November.

Next steps

- ☐ [Anupa Geevarghese] Connect MDA to Apprenticeship Director: Provide an introduction to Chris McLaren to coordinate on apprenticeship pathways.
 - ☐ [Nancy K Nunn] Share internship research: Provide the memo on apprenticeship findings to MDA and Labor within 2 weeks.
 - ☐ [Regan Vaughan] Share webinar links: Distribute information and registration links for family leave webinars to MDA for distribution to the industry.
 - ☐ [Rachel R Jones, Anupa Geevarghese] Discuss seasonal worker leave: Hold an offline conversation to navigate the practical implementation of paid leave for seasonal H2A workers.
 - ☐ [Rachel R Jones] Communicate regulatory flexibility: Inform industry members about alternative cooling measures and flexibilities regarding heat stress standards.
 - ☐ [The group] Share Agricultural Data: Share ideas or databases concerning the price premium of local agricultural products versus mass market wholesale alternatives. Provide these insights to the Department of Commerce to support the agricultural tax credit report.
 - ☐ [The group] Modify Regulatory Flexibility: Identify and implement ways to modify regulations or increase flexibility to support farmers suffering from recent freeze damage. Coordinate these efforts to ensure industry relief and assist with economic recovery.
 - ☐ [Rachel R Jones] Update Disaster Declarations: Incorporate cut flowers and nursery stock into the agricultural disaster relief programs. Coordinate with relevant departments to ensure these specific sectors receive appropriate financial support.
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Detailed Notes

- **Approval of Subcommittee Minutes:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- facilitated a vote to approve the minutes from the subcommittee meeting held in November. The

motion was seconded by Steve McHenry and Joseph Milone -COMMERCE-, and the minutes were subsequently approved.

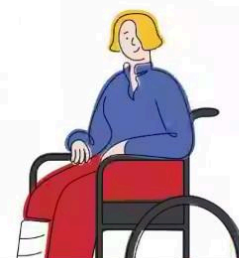
- **Joint Chairman's Report on Apprenticeships:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- introduced the upcoming December 1st reporting requirement regarding apprenticeships, noting that MDA must coordinate with the Department of Labor to gather data, as MDA does not currently offer apprenticeship programs. Anupa Geevarghese -LABOR- recommended a meeting between the two agencies to discuss pathways, and Rachel R Jones -MDA- identified Chris McLaren as the contact at the Department of Labor to initiate these discussions.
- **Apprenticeship Research and Planning:** Nancy K Nunn noted that interns have conducted research on apprenticeship programs in Maryland and other states. They plan to share this information with MDA and the Department of Labor within two weeks to support the coordination efforts.
- **Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Overview:** Regan Vaughan -LABOR- provided an overview of the FAMLI program, which is set to begin in 2028. The program provides up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period, with employees receiving up to \$1,000 per week for qualified life events, including welcoming a child, personal serious health conditions, caring for a family member, or issues related to military deployment. Employees become eligible after working 680 hours in a Maryland-based position within the most recent four quarters.

Paid family and medical leave is coming to Maryland

Starting in 2028, the Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program will ensure employees are able to:

- take time away from work;
- receive job protection;
- and earn up to \$1,000 a week

for up to 12 weeks continuously or on an intermittent basis.



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- **FAMLI Registration and Contributions:** Regan Vaughan -LABOR- explained that all employers with at least one employee in Maryland are required to participate. Registration is open now, and withholding of contributions will begin in January 2027. Contributions are split equally between employers and employees, and payments are due to the state on the same quarterly schedule as unemployment insurance.

Employer participation

All employers — regardless of payroll size — will be required to provide their employees paid family and medical leave insurance.

There are no exemptions under state law.

If you have at least one employee in Maryland, you will be required to register at paidleave.maryland.gov starting September 1, 2026.

FAMLI has its own system. Registration with other State agencies does not transfer.



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- **FAMLI Private Plan Options:** Employers may opt to use a private plan instead of the state plan, provided the benefits are equal to or better than the state plan. These private plans can be purchased from insurance companies or self-insured by employers with more than 50 employees, though all employers must still register and submit wage and hour reports to the state.

The State Plan	Private plans
After registration, employers will be automatically enrolled into the State Plan, which will provide a seamless way to comply. The State will: • collect contributions; • process claims; and • issue benefits. 	• An employer could seek approval for a commercial or self-insured plan. • Commercial and self-insured plans must offer benefits and protections that are the same as or better than the State Plan. Commercial plans must also comply with the insurance code. • The Department can set reasonable fees for employers seeking private coverage options. Employers can avoid the fee by participating in the State Plan. • Employers with private plans will be required to submit quarterly wage and hour reports and claims data.

- **FAMLI Industry Outreach:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- requested a targeted presentation for the agricultural industry to address specific concerns, suggesting a late October or early November timeframe when farmers are less busy. Regan Vaughan -LABOR- directed the committee to an online event request form for scheduling targeted presentations.
- **FAMLI Implementation for H2A Workers:** Garry Aime -MEA- and Karl Shlagel raised concerns regarding H2A and seasonal workers paying into a fund they may never use, as they are contract-based and temporary. Regan Vaughan -LABOR- clarified that the statute does not distinguish between employee types and requires all Maryland-based employees to participate, regardless of visa status.
- **FAMLI Translation and Small Employer Provisions:** Karl Shlagel requested that communication materials be available in Spanish to help explain the program to workers. Regan Vaughan -LABOR- confirmed that all documentation will be translated. Additionally, it was clarified that employers with fewer than 15

employees are exempt from contributing the employer portion, though they must still remit the employee-paid portion.

- **Policy Review for Seasonal Workers:** Following the discussion on H2A workers, Rachel R Jones -MDA- suggested that the committee discuss the issue offline with the administration or legislature to explore potential ways to address the financial impact on seasonal laborers.
- **Heat Stress Standard Implementation:** Cristina Campbell -LABOR- outlined the heat stress regulations, which were adopted in late 2024. The standard applies to all employers and is triggered when the heat index reaches 80°F. Requirements include monitoring the heat index, providing 32 ounces of water per person per hour, providing shade, and implementing acclimatization procedures.
- **Mandatory Breaks for Heat Stress:** Cristina Campbell -LABOR- explained that between a 90°F and 100°F heat index, employers must provide at least 10 minutes of break time every two hours. Above 100°F, this increases to a minimum of 15 minutes every hour.
- **Agritourism Compliance Challenges:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- conveyed feedback from agritourism operations, which expressed difficulty in managing mandatory breaks during 4-hour shifts and maintaining station coverage. Cristina Campbell -LABOR- noted that the regulation allows for alternative cooling and control measures, such as misting fans or cooling vests, which may be used in lieu of rest breaks if effective.
- **Concerns Regarding Heat Stress Regulation Aggression:** Karl Shlagel argued that the Maryland standard is more aggressive than national standards and raised concerns about the lack of available training materials for employers. Cristina Campbell -LABOR- directed the committee to resources from Montgomery County and stated that the Department of Labor is working on developing further resources for the agricultural industry.
- **Operational Feasibility of Heat Stress Standards:** Jo-Ann Chason expressed concerns about the practicality of the heat stress standards for industries involving equipment operation, such as landscaping or hay baling. Cristina Campbell -LABOR- reiterated that MOSH allows for flexibility if employers can demonstrate that alternative methods are effective at regulating body temperature and preventing heat-related illness.

- **Finished Agricultural Product Tax Credit:** Joseph Milone -COMMERCE- reported that the Department of Commerce is coordinating with MDA to compile data on food manufacturing subsectors and their potential for in-state purchasing. They are also working to quantify the impact of a proposed tax credit program using economic modeling.
- **Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAFE) Updates:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- shared updates from Suzanne Dorsey, noting a public comment period for new MSD agricultural education program standards ending August 7th, the addition of two new FFA chapters, and an application for a grant to develop a statewide strategic plan for agricultural education. Additionally, MAFE is holding a scholarship golf tournament on September 9th and their annual banquet on November 4th at Harvest Hall.
- **Regulatory Flexibility Following April Freeze:** Rachel R Jones -MDA- noted that an April freeze significantly damaged fruit and wine grape crops. As a result, a USDA disaster declaration was granted for most Maryland counties, and Governor Moore issued a directive for state agencies to provide flexibility and modify regulations to support the agricultural industry.
- **Governor's Directive on Agricultural Crop Loss:** Rachel R Jones (MDA) highlights the governor's directive regarding the significant crop losses sustained by the agricultural industry due to both drought conditions and freeze damage. The stated objective is to collaborate with sister agencies to implement measures that ease the burden on Maryland farmers as they recover from these environmental challenges. To ensure progress is made, participants will continue these discussions both through GEICA and offline.
- **Inclusion of Additional Agricultural Products:** Jo-Ann Chason raises a concern regarding the omission of certain agricultural goods from current relief considerations, specifically highlighting that cut flowers and nursery stock were not included in previous discussions. Rachel R Jones acknowledges this feedback and confirms that they are currently working to determine how to incorporate these products into the support efforts.
- **Subcommittee Meeting Schedule:** Rachel R Jones announces that the next subcommittee meeting will take place on October 1st, where the group plans to continue their ongoing conversations and attempt to advance their work on these issues.

- **Full GICA Committee Meeting Schedule:** Rachel R Jones provides information regarding upcoming meetings for the full GEICA committee, noting that the committee will convene on August 6th and December 3rd.
- **Adjournment:** The labor, education, and development meeting concludes following a motion to adjourn, which was initiated by Jo-Ann Chason and seconded by Steve McHenry.

Meeting notes were supported by Gemini and edited for accuracy by Allie Cavanagh - MDA-.