

JAZZ LEWIS
Legislative District 24
Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 151
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3691 · 301-858-3691
800-492-7122 Ext. 3691
Fax 410-841-3055 · 301-858-3055
Jazz.Lewis@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Oral Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis
HB1109– Prince George's County – Economic Development – Business
Improvement Districts PG407–23
Environment and Transportation Committee

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Crosby, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1109/PG407-23 to help allow Prince George's County to establish business improvement districts particularly around the county's Blue Line Corridor. This will allow businesses in the Corridor to supplement state and county services to make desired improvements, such as beautification and infrastructure improvements, by consolidating funds through a tax on the district's businesses. These districts established by the County are a means for businesses to come together and pool resources so that they can invest these into their community.

Creating a business improvement district is an added service to incentivize businesses to locate in the Blue Line Corridor. We as a state made a historic investment in this neglected area of the County, with a \$400 million bond initiative. But we need to continue to add incentives to private enterprise to boost the area and attract businesses to locate along the Corridor. Cities such as Bethesda serve as examples of how a business improvement district can help make walkable areas for retail, incentivize businesses to locate in the business improvement districts and create environments for success. We want to replicate this in Prince George's and give the County an extra tool in its toolkit to incentivize businesses in the areas where they can be the most beneficial.

Currently, the state has its own version of business improvement districts. However, in the state's law, 80% of businesses in an area need to vote in favor of forming a business improvement district; Such a large percentage is an impossible barrier to overcome and has proven prohibitive of BID's from being formed anywhere in the state under this law, which is why this county-specific legislation is necessary. If approved, this legislation would allow Prince George's County to begin the process of creating a business improvement district and require the approval of a simple majority of businesses located in the district.

There is an amendment as well on this bill that was not taken up by the Delegation. We are working with Prince George's Delegation Chair on getting a letter of support for the bill with the amendment included. This is on advice from DLS and the Attorney General's office who said that allowing municipalities of one County to create BID's would raise constitutional issues.

Business improvement districts are a means for local enterprises to come together to pool resources and supplement the services that they receive from the County and State. With this bill we will help incentivize businesses to locate in communities that need more investment like the Blue Line Corridor.

For these reasons I urge a favorable report.