

Budget & Taxation Committee

**Written Testimony – OPPOSITION - Senate Bill 362
Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2024**

**Mr. Paul Edwards, Chairman
Board of Garrett County Commissioners
January 29, 2024**

The initial version of the BRFA (HB 352) includes a **21% REDUCTION** in state operating funds for Garrett College! Garrett College is the smallest community college in the state and this cut would decimate the institution and force cuts that would impact the ability of Garrett College to provide two-year and career education to the citizens of Garrett County.

Overall, Governor Moore’s budget would reduce state community college operating funding by 5%; however, the distribution of this cut is different for community colleges when applied through a rather complicated community college funding formula.

Facts that need consideration:

- Garrett College enrollment increased 20% in fall 2023.
- Garrett College and the Garrett County Board of Education partner to provide a 50% tuition reduction for High School Dual Enrollment Students-twice the rate required by the state.
- Garrett College is a key component in providing programs required under the Blueprint to Excellence.

While Garrett College would be the most adversely affected community college, this action would create challenges across the entire community college sector. The ability for Garrett College to continue to provide a high-value, low-cost education will be severely challenged.

The proposed budget cuts disproportionately affect four of the most rural, and least prosperous jurisdictions in the state. Surprisingly, only these four community colleges would absorb double-digit percentage cuts to their state aid, as they are the four with the least local resources to make up those reductions.

We urge the Budget & Taxation Committee to restore funding to Garrett College, and all the community colleges affected by the proposed cuts.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration in this very important matter. Please let me know if you have any questions or need further information.