March 21, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**House Bill 1128 - Labor and Employment – Workforce Development –
Talent Innovation Program and Fund
SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Economic Council to express our full support for House Bill 1128, the Talent Innovation Fund and Program, which is currently before the House Economic Matters Committee. MEC asks that all members of the Committee support this important legislation from the Governor's Workforce Development Board and the Department of Labor that will leverage our state's assets to create a talent pipeline for emerging industries that will drive economic growth for Maryland.

The Talent Innovation Program and Fund would maximize taxpayer dollars for workforce development by capitalizing on resources from philanthropy and industry to meet training and skills needs in Maryland's prominent and emerging industry sectors, such as cybersecurity, healthcare, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and artificial intelligence. This legislation is needed to create the program and the fund, which has a $2 million appropriation in the Miller-Moore proposed budget currently before the General Assembly. The Department envisions using that initial $2 million on competitive grants to support the cybersecurity workforce, an area that our state should continue to lead on.

We are at a pivotal moment in developing these emerging industries: We must decide whether to supercharge our efforts to clearly establish ourselves as a leader or watch as other states take the helm. If we want to compete for these good jobs, capital investment, and innovative industries, we need to create the talent pipeline that takes advantage of our higher education institutions and diverse population.

MEC encourages you to pass HB 1128 to ensure that Maryland can be a leader in emerging industries like AI, biotechnology, and cybersecurity. Please let us know if you have any questions or how we can be further helpful.