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MAYOR

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SB1188

April 2, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance and Budget & Taxation Committees
FROM: Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, City of Baltimore
RE: Senate Bill 1188 - Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act
POSITION: **Support**

Chairs Beidle and Guzzone, Vice Chairs Klausmeier and Rosapepe and members of the Committees, please be advised that I strongly support Senate Bill (SB) 1188.

SB 1188 would provide temporary relief programs for individuals, small businesses, trade associations, and other companies that are directly affected by the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and subsequent temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore (“the Port”). This temporary relief will be a beacon of hope for small businesses, trade associations, and especially the workers who find themselves without work through no fault of their own. The significance of this legislation cannot be overstated.

The Port is a significant driver of our regional economy. Last year alone, the Port accounted for approximately \$3.3 billion in annual personal income and supported around 153,000 jobs directly linked to its operations. These figures, while striking, pale in comparison to the true impact that business at the Port has for the livelihoods of businesses and workers and their families.

The collision of the Dali did not just disrupt a structure; it severed a critical link to the Port of Baltimore, indefinitely halting the operations that many depend upon for their very survival. The bridge’s collapse has far-reaching impacts, affecting everything from international cargo handling, which saw over 52.3 million tons of cargo last year, to the everyday worker who relies on the Port to make ends meet.

Our City’s identity is intrinsically tied to the Port. The logistics of moving cargo through our waters is embedded in Baltimore’s DNA, passed down through generations who have made their living on these docks. It is a legacy that we cannot afford to let wither in the wake of this disaster. Among the hardest hit are the 5,529 city residents who hold direct jobs at the port, whose immediate futures are now uncertain.

SB 1188 offers a lifeline to those affected, ensuring that the workforce upon which the Port relies remains intact and ready to spring into action once repairs are made and normal operations can resume. We must do everything within our power to support this Act and expedite the relief it promises. Our commitment to our citizens and our Port is a testament to the resilience and solidarity of our community. Together, we can navigate these turbulent times and emerge stronger, preserving the legacy and the future of the Port of Baltimore for generations to come.

For the above reasons, I urge a **favorable** report for SB1188.