



Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

In Support of
Senate Bill 518— Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program--
Establishment
February 25, 2026
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 650 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on Senate Bill 518—Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program—Establishment.

Senate Bill 518 establishes the Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program, creating a statewide network of centers that offer free one-on-one financial counseling and coaching to help residents increase savings, improve credit, reduce debt and access banking services. Because the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce focuses on strengthening the business climate in Montgomery County and Maryland, we support this bill as a way to strengthen the local workforce, support small business formation and entrepreneurship and reduce financial instability that hurts local economies. This bill also promotes financial literacy across regions and languages, thereby increasing broader workforce participation and ensuring greater economic equity, which we strongly support. After all, a financially literate population is better equipped to start businesses, manage credit and contribute to the local market.

For these reasons, we strongly support Senate Bill 518 and urge a favorable vote.