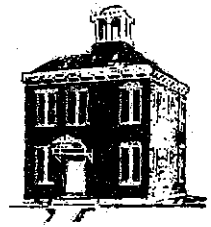


ALLEGANY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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February 22, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB0803 - Economic Development - Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment

Dear Chairman Guzzone:

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee give a **Favorable Report** to Senate Bill 0803 - Economic Development - Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment.

The Task Force on the Economic Future of Western Maryland (defined as Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties) was formed by Senator George Edwards and Delegate Jason Buckel under HB436 in the 2020 Legislative Session with two primary objectives: to study the current economic conditions in Western Maryland, and to make recommendations for potential methods to improve the region's economy. The task force includes representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, TEDCO, Maryland Association of Counties, Maryland Municipal League, Frostburg State University, Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, and Maryland Department of Commerce.

On January 20, 2021, the task force submitted fourteen recommendations, including the establishment of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund, which would support economic development in the western part of the state. The Fund has been proposed to run for a period of five years, with the Governor allocating \$20 million each fiscal year, with any unallocated dollars at the end of the fiscal year being carried over, not to impact the budget for the next fiscal year.

The Fund will be governed by an eleven-person board to include one representative from the Maryland Department of Commerce, one commissioner from each county, one economic development organization representative from each county, one representative from each Chamber of Commerce, and one representative from the Maryland Municipal League to represent the three counties. The Tri-County Council will serve as support staff to the board.

Capital infrastructure projects linked to economic development will be considered, must be linked to economic development, and will include a 20% match by the county of location, local entity, private business, or combination of these. Business development projects including capital grants, downtown/area revitalization, small business tourism grants, and other items


not related to capital infrastructure may be approved, and will include a 10% match as outlined above. Projects must prove economic improvement through specific metrics, including jobs (created or retained), new or retained businesses, increased wages, or state and local tax revenue. Projects will be presented to the board for a vote.

The board will provide an annual report to highlight details based on the metrics included in each project and will determine any insufficient progress, including lack of delivery on promised economic improvements, with the authority to claw back the award. It should be noted that investments from this fund will not replace existing funding opportunities from other state programs, but will serve as an additional source.

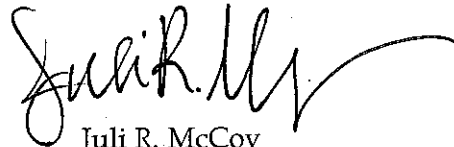
Greater opportunity and a brighter future in Western Maryland can be born from your support of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund. With respect, we ask that you give due consideration to the potential that exists in this unique, but often-forgotten, part of the state.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jeremy G. Irons
Legislative Committee Chair



Juli R. McCoy
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Members
Western Maryland Delegation