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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 113
Board of Revenue Estimates and Bureau of Revenue Estimates - Organization and Operations

February 4, 2021 at 1:30PM ~ Ways and Means Committee

What this bill does

Recognizing the importance of having accurate estimates of our state revenue, especially during volatile times, this bill enhances the Bureau of Revenue Estimates and increases its accountability and transparency. HB113 makes several changes to the Bureau of Revenue Estimates, including changes to staffing and reporting requirements to make the Bureau more transparent and to ensure that it is adequately staffed to better assist the Legislative and Executive branches as they craft the state budget each year, and to aid local governments in their revenue estimates.

The bill makes the following adjustments to the Bureau:

- Modifies the process for selecting a chief analyst and specifies the minimum number of analysts required
- Ensures that the BRE submits its March report to the General Assembly prior to the passage of the budget bill to ensure that the assembly has the most up-to-date numbers available
- Requires quadrennial reporting analyzing the accuracy of reports and estimates
- Requires quadrennial reporting on the transparency and usability of the data and reports and analysis of the staffing needs of the agency
- Ensures a predetermined schedule each year and public notice of the date and time of meetings
- Requires the BRE to develop and maintain its own website to provide information about upcoming Board meetings and live links to video streaming of each open meeting of the board
- Makes available to the public reports and analysis on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund, the Transportation Trust Fund, and the Education Trust Fund, as well as other information the BRE considers relevant

Why it matters

In increasingly turbulent times, the importance of the BRE's role cannot be overstated. It needs highly-qualified staff, transparent processes, and accountability to the public and state

government. This legislation is about ensuring that this agency is competent, transparent, and accountable.

Adding a level of review at the state of selecting a Chief, as well as mandated reporting from the Bureau and the DLS offers accountability that simply does not exist today. Marylanders deserve the assurances that the public servants in Annapolis - whether elected or selected by other elected officials - are qualified and held accountable for their leadership.

Why you should support this bill

Not only does the bill provide for an expanded process to select an executive leader holding a great deal of power and influence, the bill also provides increased accountability and transparency for all Marylanders. Any Marylander with access to the internet will be able to follow the Board of Estimate meetings, watch archive videos, and much more without having to reach out to the agency to gather the information they are seeking. This immediate, and easy, access saves both the Bureau and citizens time, money and effort. This bill also positions the Bureau and the Board to be more effective in assisting the Governor and Legislature - as well as local governments - in estimating the revenues on which our budgets are based.

I urge a favorable report.

Sponsor amendments

1. Strike the requirement that the Chief and Deputy Chief must be part of the Maryland Executive Pay Plan
2. Require that the Comptroller appoint the Chief from a list of not fewer than three candidates reviewed and evaluated by the Revenue Monitoring Committee (in addition to the Consensus Review Monitoring and Forecasting group)
3. Require that the Revenue Monitoring Committee review and approve estimates and projections of the Bureau in December, March and September of each year (page 3 lines 23-26) before these become formal projections