

SB 923 Testimony.pdf

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Town of Forest Heights

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Taunya Hines – Ward III

Paula Noble – Ward III

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 923 (Town of Forest Heights, Maryland)

Good afternoon Chairman Guzzone and members of the Committee. My name is Mayor Calvin Washington, and I am here on behalf of the Town of Forest Heights to request a favorable report on SB 923.

Forest Heights is a small town with a population of approximately 2,600 residents located within Prince George's County. We are a community bisected by State Highway 210 and located near the Washington, DC line on our northern border, and aligned with the Capital Beltway (Interstate 495) within our southern border. And we are proud that Forest Heights is a very ethnically diverse community.

Our support for Senate Bill 923 stems from our mission to constantly identify resources needed to proactively address issues we see as critical to the Town of Forest Heights.

Although we, like other towns and cities have recently received funding and revenue assistance from programs related to COVID-19, our primary challenges related to our town tax base remain unchanged.

From a budgetary standpoint, we are a municipality with an approximate \$8 million annual Budget. We strive every day to provide essential services to our residents, as well as crucial infrastructure repair & improvements. However, with a significant elderly population, a limited commercial tax base, and a location so close to a large casino and the Washington DC border, we do have our challenges. The local impact funding we have received over the years has gone a long way in helping the public safety and infrastructure of our community.

To date, we have used this funding on several projects, including implementing 24-hour patrol coverage for our police force. We have also addressed critical stormwater management and repair projects in Town. And while these projects represent a great start, we have a ways to go.

As we emerge from the pandemic, the State has repeatedly posted record months of revenue for the casinos. And MGM has also opened their retail sportsbook platform. While the increased traffic to the casino has benefited the tourism market of Prince George's County and the tax base of Maryland, there has been wear and tear on our Town. We need the resources to manage the increased business and patronage so that Forest Heights may grow in step with the casino. We look forward to working with the State as the Town grows. Thank you for your dedication to the State of Maryland and we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 923.