

Legislative Position: Oppose
House Bill 478
Economic Development – Enterprise Zone Program – Alterations
House Ways and Means Committee

February 14, 2022

Dear Madame Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, with 575 members representing over 40,000 employees, I am writing you in opposition of **House Bill 478, Economic Development – Enterprise Zone Program – Alterations**. The proposed alterations in this legislation negatively impact distressed census tracts by limiting growth to existing zones. The bill will eliminate growth opportunities for struggling areas by making the Enterprise Zone inaccessible, thereby reducing development opportunities. Now is not the time to stop investing in a program that will strengthen the current and future economic landscape of Hagerstown, Maryland, Washington County, and the State of Maryland.

To say that COVID-19 has had a tremendous and detrimental impact on our local economy would be an understatement. The impact of HB 478, as laid out in the bill's language, would negatively impact the momentum our community has been building, in spite of Covid. Maintaining the current Enterprise Zone Program, as it is currently being administered, is desperately needed for our local economies to continue addressing the impact of the pandemic. Keeping the Program's language as it is currently written will allow us to capitalize on future opportunities created by the Enterprise Zone Program. Everyone wins together when economic development occurs.

On behalf of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, and the continued economic health of Hagerstown, Maryland, Washington County, and the State of Maryland, we respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on HB 478.

Sincerely,



Paul Frey, IOM
President and CEO