

March 28, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB0474 – Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment**

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary:

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests the House Ways and Means Committee give a **Favorable Report** to Senate Bill 0474 – 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 initially formed by Senator George Edwards and Delegate Jason Buckel under HB0436 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 included 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 6, 2022, the task force re-submitted its revised recommendations from the 2021 submission, including the establishment of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund, which would be linked to economic infrastructure and business development projects specific to Western Maryland.

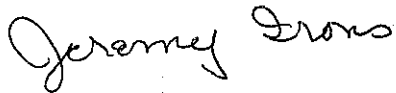
The Fund, initially proposed for a period of five years, with the Governor allocating \$20 million each fiscal year, has been crossed to your committee with amendments, reducing the timeframe to just three years, which ultimately will decrease the total amount of dollars allocated. While this is not what we initially advocated for, we are pleased that the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee sees the value in supporting economic investment and growth in the western counties of the state.

Our Chamber of Commerce represents over 300 businesses and organizations in Allegany County, of which over 70% are considered small- to mid-sized operations of 25 or less employees. We are fortunate to have so many who choose to invest their talent here and to offer opportunities to others. With major workforce development programs, but only two major employers in Allegany County (UPMC Western Maryland and the Board of Education), we are losing some of our most talented people. The communities of western Maryland can serve as a place for businesses to thrive.

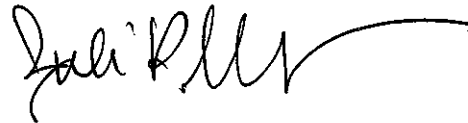
The study that was conducted to provide a baseline of the region's economic challenges should be alarming in comparison to other regions. However, greater opportunity and a brighter future in Western Maryland can be born from your support of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund, which will address economic development and population decline, both of which are vital to our sustainability. With respect, we ask that you give consideration to the potential that exists in Western Maryland with a **favorable report** of SB0474.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jeremy G. Irons  
Legislative Committee Chair



Juli R. McCoy  
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee  
House Ways and Means Committee Members  
Allegany County Delegation