



- Washington County Government
- City of Hagerstown
- Hagerstown Community College
- Washington Co. Free Library
- Town of Williamsport
- Town of Boonsboro
- The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Inc.
- Hagerstown-Washington Co. Chamber of Commerce
- Visit Hagerstown (Local Convention & Visitor's Bureau)
- CHIEF (Hagerstown-Washington Co. Industrial Foundation)

Washington County Community Coalition

Lobbyist: John Favazza, Esquire Mannis Canning & Associates 410.263.7882 jfavazza@maniscanning.com

Legislative Position: Support

House Bill 838

Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment

House Ways and Means Committee

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 838 – Economic Development - Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund – Establishment

Dear Madam Chair and Distinguished Committee Members,

The Washington County Community Coalition, representing ten community partner groups, would like to express our strong support for HB 838 – “Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund – Establishment.”

Over the last decade, the western counties of our state have struggled to grow at rates similar to other parts of our state. Two of the three counties have seen a drop in population, and Washington County has only seen an increase of less than 0.5% per year. In addition, all three counties were hit hard by the pandemic, which took a toll on many of the industries that make up our regional economy – particularly tourism and retail. While tourism is bouncing back, the restaurant and retail industries continue to struggle and our counties are working to find ways to diversify our economies with new industries that are projected to grow in the coming years. While the last several years have been difficult, we believe there are opportunities that all of our counties can pursue to change our direction and achieve economic success for our respective communities.

HB 838 came out of months of work by public and private representatives from our three counties, which made up the Task Force on the Economic Future of Western Maryland. This legislation invests in our communities at a time where it's most needed. The creation of the Western MD Economic Investment Fund would allow for more prosperity for the three counties it would impact, and would



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contribute to the overall economic health in the State of Maryland. Our three counties have successfully collaborated in a similar fashion through Tri-County Council which oversees the ARC funding for our region.

To say that COVID-19 has had a tremendous and detrimental impact on Western Maryland's economy would be an understatement. The program created, as laid out in HB 838, would be an outstanding part of the work needed for our local economies to overcome the impact of the pandemic, and then allow us to capitalize on future opportunities created by working in a public/private relationship. Everyone invests together and everyone wins together.

On behalf of the ten community partner groups representing the Washington County Community Coalition, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on HB 838.

Sincerely,

Paul Frey, *Managing Partner for The Washington County Community Coalition*