

House Bill 478

Economic Development - Enterprise Zone Program - Alterations

Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: February 16, 2022

To: Ways and Means

The Caroline County Office of Economic Development **SUPPORTS** HB 478, Economic Development - Enterprise Zone Program - Alterations. This legislation strengthens the Enterprise Zone Program by defining a specific purpose, altering the designation criteria, and making the program more robust for rural economic development in Caroline County.

The Enterprise Zone program is a proven tool for economic development professionals to encourage and incentivize development in areas that are economically disadvantaged. The program supports the two main tenets of economic development – job creation and capital investment through a partnership between the State and local government. The program requires thoughtful consideration by the local administrator to designate specific areas for development, thus focusing growth in the most needed areas of towns and counties. HB 478 helps that focus by providing a purpose for the program and centralizing reporting so that its success is measurable.

I was privileged to be a member of the bill sponsor's, Delegate Palakovich Carr, work group in 2021 on looking at the Enterprise Zone program from goals to outcomes. The work group learned about some of the issues surrounding the program, such as a purpose statement which was unattainable and decentralized reporting. Based on the feedback of the work group and her own understanding the programs limitations and issues, Delegate Palakovich Carr drafted HB 478. This legislation allows for a program that provides a proven tool to economic development, while answering to some of the critical issues that were brought to light in the past.

Caroline County Economic Development supports HB 478, and we respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 478.

Sincerely,



Debbie Bowden
Director