

House Appropriations Committee

**Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 654
Community Colleges – Capital Projects – State Share Adjustment**

**Mr. Will Wrobleski, President & CEO
Garrett County Chamber of Commerce
February 28, 2023**

The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce has a keen understanding of the importance an educated workforce plays in a community's economic health. Garrett College – through both its credit programs and non-credit workforce training leading to industry-recognized credentials – plays a critical role in providing our residents with access to quality educational opportunities. The College is able to fulfill its mission, first and foremost, by attracting and retaining highly qualified faculty and support staff. Its ability to develop and maintain appropriate facilities is also critically important if Garrett College is to meet its educational mission. For that reason, the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce strongly supports House Bill 654, which would favorably adjust the state and local funding ratio for Garrett College capital projects.

Garrett College's facilities are impressive and well-maintained. That said, many of the buildings on the College's main campus in McHenry were originally built in the 1970s and '80s. The College's 2022-31 Facilities Master Plan is focused on three potential major renovations to key buildings that house academic spaces and student support facilities. Both the College administration and the County Commissioners have stated those future projects will be extremely challenging to fund if Garrett County remains responsible for half of the cost. HB 654 could reduce the local share to as little as 30%, which would make implementation of the FY2022-31 Facilities Master Plan much more achievable.

This bill, if passed and signed into law, would be a "game-changer" in the College's ability to provide 21st-century facilities for 21st-century students. I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 654.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of this legislation.