

House Appropriations Committee

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

**Mr. Paul Edwards, Chair
Garrett County Board of Commissioners
February 28, 2023**

The Garrett County Board of Commissioners has always understood the importance of Garrett College to our community – and funded it accordingly. Our “promise” program – the Garrett County Scholarship Program (GCSP) – was one of the first of its kind in the country. It is also one of the most comprehensive promise programs, funding tuition and fees for recent high school graduates, dually enrolled high schools students, and non-traditional students in workforce training programs that lead to recognized certifications. We have also regularly funded the local share of Garrett College capital projects, including a STEM Center that opened in 2018 and a performing arts center that opened late last year. Our funding of higher education in Garrett County is particularly impressive when one considers that our county is by far the smallest in the state in terms of population.

While our support for Garrett College remains constant, our ability to continue funding the local share of the College’s capital projects at the current 50% rate is unsustainable. We strongly support House Bill 654, which would provide for an adjustment in the state share for counties that currently shoulder 50% of community college capital project costs and are in the bottom quartile of median household income. The provision of HB 654 that permits counties that meet those standards to adopt the local share of a border county that is less than 50% but closest to 50% would greatly increase Garrett County’s ability to financially assist Garrett College in upcoming capital renovations.

There is precedent for the legislative relief we are requesting in HB 654. Senator George Edwards and Delegate Wendell Beitzel sponsored legislation in 2020 and 2022 that adjusted the formula for public school construction and library construction, respectively, in order to reduce the local share of those projects for Garrett County. HB 654, sponsored by Delegate Hinebaugh, would have a positive impact on Garrett College similar to what the earlier legislation did for our schools and our library.

Garrett College is an outstanding institution of higher education, and an important community asset. Passage of HB 654 would play a pivotal role in ensuring the College has the funding necessary to renovate campus buildings, some of which were built a half-century ago during the College’s initial construction.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill on behalf of the Garrett County Commissioners. I encourage this committee to support HB 654.