

House Appropriations Committee

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

**Mr. Don Morin, Board of Trustees Chair
Garrett College
February 28, 2023**

The Garrett College Board of Trustees unanimously and enthusiastically supports House Bill 654. This bill, introduced at the Board's request by Delegate Hinebaugh, would provide an adjustment to the state share of community college capital projects for counties in the bottom quartile of median household income. It would reduce by as much as two-fifths the local share for future Garrett College capital projects. This would have a profound effect on our ability to continue renovating our main campus buildings, many of which are now 40 to 50 years old and in dire need of renovation.

I'd like to emphasize that the Garrett County Commissioners are strong supporters and generous funders of Garrett College. The College – despite being located in the least populated county in the state – has received regular local operating budget increases, and has a fully funded Promise Program for recent high school graduates, dually-enrolled high school students, and students in credentialed workforce training programs. The Commissioners have in the last five years also provided the 50% match for a new STEM Center as well as \$4 million toward a community performing arts center that recently opened on our campus.

The Commissioners informed us last summer that they cannot commit for the foreseeable future to a 50% match on upcoming capital projects. HB 654 provides a path forward to funding our next project – a partial renovation of our student center that would permit replacement of a 41-year-old cafeteria. Even after cutting in half the scope of that project, we simply cannot fully fund the local share. Our county can contribute \$1.25 million, and the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to match that \$1.25 out of the College fund balance. HB 654 would allow Garrett College to use the same state/local split as bordering Allegany County, creating a 70/30 ratio that would turn \$5 million in available funding into \$8.5 million. That would make all the difference in our ability to fund the partial student center renovation and future capital projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill. I encourage this committee to support HB 654.