

Garrett County Testimony SB 524.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Null

Position: FAV

THE BOARD OF GARRETT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

203 South Fourth Street - Courthouse - Room 207 Oakland, Maryland 21550

www.garrettcountry.org countycommissioners@garrettcountry.org

301-334-8970

301-895-3188

FAX 301-334-5000

Board of Commissioners

Paul C. Edwards
Ryan S. Savage
S. Larry Tichnell

County Administrator

Kevin G. Null

County Attorney

Gorman E. Getty III

February 27, 2023

Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 524

Garrett County – Board of County Commissioners – Meetings

Mr. Paul C. Edwards, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Garrett County

February 28, 2023

The Garrett County Board of Commissioners supports Senate Bill 524, Garrett County – Board of County Commissioners – Meetings

The current provision of the law states that *the Board of County Commissioners will meet in public session weekly*. By practice, the Board of County Commissioners meet in public session biweekly. The intent of the legislation is to have our current practice of biweekly meeting be in compliance the law.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, Garrett County has live-streaming public meeting. We request that this language be added- *Public meetings may be in person or live streamed* to be clear that a live-streamed meeting was considered a “public meeting.”

Based on citizen input we request that the following language be added to ensure that future Boards could not conduct a public meeting via only live stream except in a state of emergency-*A board of Garrett County Commissioners may not meet solely via live streaming for more than two (2) consecutive meeting without a formal declaration of a state of emergency.*

The Board of County commissioners support SB 524 and believe it offers the citizens the opportunity to participate in county government meetings.

Thank you for your consideration and support for SB 524.

SB 524.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE MCKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 416
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3565 · 301-858-3565
800-492-7122 Ext. 3565
Mike.McKay@senate.state.md.us

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Bill 524 – Garrett County – Board of County Commissioners – Meetings

February 23, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

The purpose of this bill is to require the Garrett County Commissioners to hold public meetings twice a month at the least. As public servants, it is important that Garrett County's elected officials are seen carrying out their roles in government as well as having public participation as often as possible.

Thank you very much and I ask for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike McKay
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

Charlene Testimony SB0524 GC Code 20230228.pdf

Uploaded by: Charlene Pullias

Position: FWA

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments – SB0524 “Garrett County - Board of County Commissioners – Meetings”
TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
DATE: February 28, 2023
FROM: Charlene Pullias, Oakland, Garrett County, MD

My name is Charlene Pullias, and I am a resident of Garrett County. I represent a concerned group of Garrett County citizens who regularly attend the County Commissioner meetings.

The current Garrett County Code, Section 30.03, requires that "The Board of County Commissioners will meet in public session weekly." For as long as I can remember, the County Commissioners have met not weekly in public but twice a month. I do understand that SB0524 is needed to bring the code into compliance with the practice. I must say, however, that's not how I thought government was supposed to work. Still, I support that part of the bill.

However, the part that concerns me is that the wording of the bill would allow for a Board of Commissioners to have ALL meetings by "video broadcast". While this was necessary during COVID and I am glad we had that option, what concerns me about this is that the current Board of County Commissioners has a policy of not allowing questions or comments during a "video broadcast" public meeting. During the pandemic live streamed meetings, there was no live interaction with the Commissioners during public meetings. This was a concern to many of us as the practice did not allow those viewing by video to get clarification on what was being discussed and to learn about the thoughts and concerns of other residents. This practice continues during the current hybrid meetings. We have brought this concern to the Commissioners but have never received a satisfying answer.

If a Board of Commissioners chooses to do all their public meetings via "video broadcast" and continues the practice of prohibiting comments and questions during the live session, it presents a huge obstacle to engaging with the residents of Garrett County. We strongly believe the wording of SB0524 should be such that this possibility is disallowed.

We believe that the bill needs to include the following wording:

“Public meetings may be in person or simultaneously interactive and live streamed. A board of Garrett County Commissioners may not meet solely via live streaming for more than two (2) consecutive meetings without a formal declaration of a state of emergency.”

With this new wording, the bill will increase the possibility of productive citizen engagement. Without this change, the bill as it stands allows for curtailed citizen engagement and weakens our democracy

Thank you.