



## Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

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1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585

### Testimony IN FAVOR of SB696

*Prince Georges County – Gateways Arts Development Authority – Established*

To: Honorable Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier and Members of the Senate Finance Committee  
From: Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier  
Date: Friday, March 03, 2023

As Mayor of the City of Mount Rainier I have always supported the Arts and Development of Mount Rainier and surrounding communities without changing the character and values of our City. For far too long economic development hasn't made it to our end of Maryland, impacting our City and region in a negative way. The ability to establish the Gateway Arts Development Authority would give our area the leadership, vision, support to develop and revitalize the Gateway to Maryland. We need to grow without pushing out those that have invested in our cities and towns and improve spaces to also welcome new development in the area. That is why we ask for a **FAVORABLE Support for the establishment of the Gateways Arts Development Authority.**

The City of Mount Rainier is a thriving diverse community of over eight-thousand residents. The highest density populated city per square foot in Maryland. Our city is enriched by diversity and the Arts and being part of an Arts District has empowered our communities. As our cities and towns continue to thrive, several residents, businesses and artists have been priced out of the community taking with them needed talents to our area and State. Mount Rainier is a city that strongly believes in Economic Development and revitalization are important therefore we are one of the few cities our size in the state to hire an Economic Development Director to help revitalize our city with the very, very limited funding we have move towards the right direction and seen the impacts this has created but we cannot do this alone as we are working with many decades of no development in our City and region and are only as strong if the area is economically strong and thriving which also bring needed job to communities, deter crime created by empty storefronts and decade building and empowered the revitalization needed as well as keep Marylanders dollars in Maryland instead of going to DC. By re/creating spaces where residents walk, bike and the heavy traffic we have into our city from and to DC to stop and invest their money in our community and State bringing also outside dollars into our cities.

Establishing The Gateway Arts Development Authority would help us revitalize our cities and towns and by doing so strengthen the Gateway to Maryland and our economic future.

**The City of Mount Rainier strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill SB696.**

please don't hesitate to contact me [MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org](mailto:MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org) should you have any questions.

Respectfully,

*Celina Benitez*

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier, Maryland  
First Latina Mayor of The City of Mount Rainier  
First Latina Mayor of a City in the State of Maryland