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TESTIMONY ON SB#0766 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Fair Share Plan for Maryland

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Thomas Kennedy

My name is Thomas Kennedy I am a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#766, Fair Share for Maryland Plan.

I am a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Chevy Chase/Bethesda,. I retired from a position as Executive Director of the American Society of Media Photographers in July 2020 after a 50 year career in visual media, primarily as a photo editor. Currently, I am a volunteer with the Maryland Poor People's Campaign.

Immediately after retiring, I started volunteering with my church's efforts to launch a food distribution effort to alleviate food insecurity for county residents being impacted by the loss of jobs due to the pandemic. Within two years, our efforts spun off a nonprofit called Nourishing Bethesda. Today, that nonprofit is continuing to supply food to food insecure people and our numbers continue to climb, notwithstanding trends with COVID-19 itself. Food insecurity is but one manifestation of income inequality that continues to plague our citizens and put them at risk.

I strongly believe income inequality is the result of laws and mechanisms that tilt in favor of individuals and corporations who have developed legal mechanisms to avoid paying their fair share..

This bill increases the number of tax brackets and therefore makes income taxes more progressive. Also, as a Marylander, I know that our state has a budget shortfall which is bound to require cutting of vital services in our state.

I say this have observed the pattern that played out throughout the Hogan administration where elements of the social safety net were routinely pitted against one another under the rationale that "scarcity" prevented doing otherwise.

The Fair Share Plan is projected to increase tax revenue by \$1.6 billion per year, which could only help relieve this shortfall. Remember that people who receive inheritance generally have not worked to earn them, so increased taxes on estates should not interfere with work

incentives. Finally, this bill will increase the number of families with children who can receive help from the state.

My faith teaches me that our primary directive is to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” I interpret this to mean supporting my neighbor by supporting the services that ensure they have enough to thrive. If others neglect this directive, we are left with the situation where the social safety net is unavailable to those who need help the most. Although people of every race use government services as elements of the social safety net, it is clear that poor and low-wealth working people need them the most; especially in Maryland where despite our wealth as a state, between 2018-2020, 2.1 million Marylanders were poor or low-income, accounting for 36.1% of the state’s population. I consider these people my neighbors, worthy of support from a government that has a fair tax system.

To reiterate, I support the Fair Share for Maryland Plan, not just because it will fairly tax wealthy people (who now pay less than their fair share), but because it could bring needed revenue to the State of Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#766

Thomas Kennedy