



## Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

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1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 [MountRainierMD.org](http://MountRainierMD.org)

Monday, March 25, 2024

Dear Honorable Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing to you to express the City of Mount Rainier support for House Bill 165. This bill, with its proposed amendments, represents a significant opportunity to ensure that municipalities like ours are able to maintain and enhance public safety without the risk of losing essential police aid funding due to audit reporting timelines.

The City of Mount Rainier, like many small municipalities, operates with limited financial and human resources. The ability to comply with stringent audit reporting requirements annually can be challenging, particularly in times of unforeseen circumstances or resource constraints. HB 165, in its original form, aimed to address the need for timely and transparent financial reporting by local governments. However, the potential for municipalities to lose police aid funding due to non-compliance with these requirements posed a significant concern for communities already struggling to meet the demands of public safety and community services.

The amendments proposed to HB 165 are crucial for municipalities such as Mount Rainier. By not allowing police aid funding to be taken away for failing to meet the audit reporting deadline, the bill acknowledges the critical importance of uninterrupted support for local law enforcement and public safety initiatives. Furthermore, the provisions extending the application date and changing the reporting timeframe from 1 to 3 years offer municipalities a more realistic and manageable timeline to fulfill audit reporting obligations without jeopardizing essential funding.

These changes reflect a thoughtful consideration of the operational realities faced by local governments, especially smaller towns and cities with limited administrative capacities. They allow municipalities to catch up and ensure compliance with audit reporting requirements without the fear of losing funding that is crucial for maintaining public safety and community well-being.

We urge the committee to consider the positive impact that these amendments will have on municipalities across Maryland. By supporting HB 165 with the proposed changes, you will be affirming your commitment to the safety and security of our communities, ensuring that municipalities are not penalized for striving to meet audit reporting standards. Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Celina Benitez*

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier