



April 4, 2024

**House Bill 1526**

**Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act**

**House Economic Matters Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 1526 – Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act

Anne Arundel County applauds the swift response of the Governor’s Administration, federal partners, and local leaders who immediately deployed support and resources to address the unexpected tragedy and begin recovery efforts.

The Francis Scott Key Bridge plays a vital role in Maryland’s economy and transportation, and infrastructure operations. Over 11 million drivers cross the bridge per year, and since its collapse, thousands of jobs have been impacted. Port workers are looking at unemployment while commuters need to find alternative traffic routes for their destinations. Six families, while dealing with the tremendous loss of their loved ones, now have to figure out how to move forward financially with a loss of household income. We must pass legislation that provides effective support for the families and workers, ensures that local businesses can thrive, and creates a pathway for the Port of Baltimore to continue being a strong economic engine for Maryland while rebuilding efforts are underway.

House Bill 1526 establishes a temporary assistance program through the Department of Commerce for small businesses and companies that rely on access to the port and its operations. This Bill also establishes a temporary unemployment assistance program through the Department of Labor for workers affected by port closings and workers who were employed by the port, but don’t qualify for certain benefits. House Bill 1526 is only part of the overall solution, but it’s imperative that we use every tool in our toolkit to support workers and businesses in this period of economic flux and rebuilding of the Key Bridge.

Anne Arundel County believes that this legislation is a critical step for Maryland’s recovery, and we support the General Assembly’s efforts to move this Bill as quickly as possible so workers and businesses can apply for resources. For all of these reasons, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 1526.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steuart Pittman".

Steuart Pittman  
County Executive