



Office of The Mayor Celina R. Benitez

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

RE: Favorable Support for Senate Bill 0659
The Prince George's Gateway Development Authority - Modifications.

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Energy, Education, and Environment Committee,

I am writing to you as Mayor Celina Benitez of the City of Mount Rainier, a vibrant and diverse community that stands as a testament to the resilience and creativity of its residents. Our commitment to the arts, development, and the preservation of our city's unique character and values remains unwavering. As we continue to advocate for the growth and prosperity of Mount Rainier and the surrounding regions, it is with great enthusiasm that I express my support for SB0659, the Prince George's Gateway Development Authority - Modifications.

Since the establishment of the Gateway Arts Development Authority, we have witnessed the potential for transformative change within our communities. However, to realize this potential fully, it is imperative that we implement modifications to ensure the Authority operates with increased efficiency and effectiveness. The requirement for the Authority to meet at least four times per year, coupled with the provision for staff support in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, represents a crucial step towards achieving our shared goals for neighborhood revitalization and economic development.

The City of Mount Rainier, with its rich diversity and dedication to the arts, is a microcosm of the promise that lies within our region. Our city is home to over eight thousand residents and boasts the highest population density per square foot in Maryland. This density brings challenges, but also opportunities—opportunities for economic development, community engagement, and cultural expression. The Gateway Arts Development Authority has the potential to harness these opportunities, driving growth and innovation without displacing the very individuals who have contributed to our community's vibrancy.

The modifications proposed in SB0659 are not merely administrative adjustments; they are a reaffirmation of our commitment to equitable development, community empowerment, and sustainable economic growth. By ensuring regular meetings and dedicated support from the Department of Housing and Community Development, we can enhance the Authority's capacity to support comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans that benefit residents, housing, neighborhoods, economic development, and transportation.

The City of Mount Rainier has long recognized the importance of economic development and revitalization. Despite our limited resources, we have made significant strides towards revitalizing our city. However, the challenges we face are not confined to the boundaries of Mount Rainier—they are regional in scope. The Gateway Arts Development Authority stands as a beacon of hope, a means through which we can collectively address decades of underdevelopment and build a future that reflects the aspirations of all Marylanders.

I urge you to support the modifications to SB0659, thereby strengthening the Prince George's Gateway Development Authority's ability to make a lasting, positive impact on our communities. Together, we

can ensure that the gateway to Maryland is not only a passageway but a destination—a place where people from all walks of life come to live, work, and thrive.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I look forward to the positive changes that SB0659, with your support, will bring to our region. Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email Mayorbenitez@MountRainierMD.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier