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HEARING DATE: February 6, 2024

BILL: HB0248

TITLE: Property Tax - Assessment Appeal Boards and Supervisors - Regional Organization

SDAT POSITION: SUPPORT

The Department of Assessments and Taxation Supports House Bill 248 This legislation would consolidate the Department's 24 county real property assessment offices into 8 regional offices. The bill would also consolidate all 24 county property assessment appeals boards into 8 regional appeals boards, and clarify that staff on The Department's property assessment teams cannot also serve their appeals boards.

In its ongoing process to find efficiencies in its services, The Department identified significant challenges in its county real property assessment offices due to strains on current funding and staffing. Last year, the Department's Anne Arundel County assessment office had 0 commercial property assessors on staff. County offices already have limited flexibility to shift assessors to meet the State's property assessment needs, a process which brings millions of dollars in revenue that local governments across the State rely on. The Department currently pays for 24 county offices, along with necessary staffing redundancies, expenses that become less necessary as new technologies allow assessors to move away from making as many in-person assessments.

Furthermore, the Department is required by statute to assess one third of the state every year. This is accomplished by assessing properties in one third of each county each year, a workload which varies from county-to-county. By consolidating offices, the Department will be able to shift assessors around more efficiently.

HB 248 would give the Department more flexibility to allocate resources as necessary and reduce wasteful spending on offices that no longer require a physical presence in every county by consolidating all 24 offices and appeals boards in 8 regional offices. If passed, this legislation would allow the Department to shift resources to ensure a more accurate and efficient assessment process while being a better steward of taxpayer dollars. In a challenged budget environment, this timely legislation allows the State to more efficiently and effectively generate vital revenues for state and local government and deliver a higher standard of service to the public.

Accordingly, the Department respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 248.