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**Testimony on SB0859 - Position FAVORABLE
The Fair Share for Maryland Plan of 2025**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee;

As a resident and taxpayer in Maryland, I strongly urge Members of the House Ways and Means Committee to support the Fair Share for Maryland Plan (SB0859). I believe it is absolutely essential in 2025 that Maryland's leaders recalibrate our taxation system to ensure the wealthiest individuals and families pay *at least* the same percentage of income in taxes as their fellow Marylanders who are low- and middle-income earners. Now is the time for Maryland's leaders to establish an equitable "fair taxation" system in Maryland. We literally can no longer afford not to.

Maryland's tax system is an example of systemically embedded inequity, wherein those who make less income turn over a larger percentage annually in taxes than do wealthy residents who not only take in millions of dollars each year, but also use that vast wealth to access all manner of high-income-qualifying financial instruments to "shelter" their income from national and state tax assessments. It is just plain wrong.

We must maintain our focus on maintaining a high quality of life for all Maryland residents. In doing so, Maryland will continue to attract and keep high-earning residents and families. Everyone deserves to work, live in and enjoy in state that, in the broadest sense, is fully and well-functioning, invests in high-quality education, keeps roadways in good repair, provides state-of-the-art health care, attractive athletic fields and children's playgrounds, clean state parks and waterways, stable sand beaches, international airports, accessibility for senior citizens and disabled residents, and a multitude of cultural institutions and events that reflect our diversity of geography and people.

We are facing an enormous \$300 Billion budget deficit. Simultaneously, thousands of middle-income Federal employees, a major segment of workers contributing at this state's highest taxation rate of 9.5%, now face disastrous lay-offs and Maryland will lose that important stream of income tax revenue. Plugging that cavernous budget gap with cuts in education and "sin" taxes on sugary drinks and cannabis sales is regressive and just won't fill that budget hole. This confluence of circumstances should super-charge an immediate reckoning around bringing equity into our state's tax system by requiring that Maryland's millionaires step up and finally pay their fair share.

While there will always be wealthy retirees who seek residency in states like Florida or spend their vast disposable income on travel and second homes in other states and abroad, most

wealthy Marylanders choose to live, work, raise families and, yes, retire here because Maryland still offers an amazing combination of opportunities to live, work, play right at their doorsteps.

But all those civic amenities require continued investment from all of us, equally. We cannot afford civic disinvestment in these extraordinary times. And we absolutely cannot afford to let wealthiest residents with high disposable income exclude themselves from Maryland's communal responsibility by demanding and benefitting from the continuation of a state tax system that substantially walls-off the wealthiest among us from fair taxation.

Across this nation, there is no issue that has generated more rancor among Americans across the political spectrum than wealth-hoarding and the outsized economic and political power wielded by the proverbial One- Percent. Anger also extends to "the elites"- our society's cultural, social, professional, and political leaders who are dependant on accessing the favor of One-Percenters -whether for philanthropy, professional opportunities or campaign funding, and are, therefore, loathe to disturb the status quo, particularly around economic issues - like tax policies. Frankly, in these troubling economic times, the deep concerns of Maryland's low- and middle-income (and most reliable) tax-payers deserve to be seen and supported by Maryland's political leadership by rebalancing our taxation scales.

I plead with you to earn back the full faith of Maryland's low- and middle-income tax-paying residents and voters through your support of SB0859, The Fair Share for Maryland Plan.