



Senator George C. Edwards *Fund*

March 5, 2025

Dear Chairman and Members,

I'm writing to express my support for **SB861/HB1459** and ask that you also support these bills and pass them. I worked very hard during the 40 years I served in the legislature to help the areas I represented move forward economically, and it was a hard job.

This is the most rural part of Maryland. Allegany and Garrett Counties are two of the four poorest counties in Maryland. They are also known as Mountain Maryland. Many years ago there were several major companies in Mountain Maryland, but they have closed or moved out of the area. During this time, Cumberland was the second-largest city in Maryland at around 50,000 people, and now has less than 20,000. Garrett's population has remained around 30,000 over the last several decades.

Some of us have been looking at what the state might be able to do to get us moving forward with economic development. After a lot of thought and discussion, we came up with the bill that was passed a couple of years ago that will cease after this coming year if we don't continue the program.

There are many instances where the state has put more than \$500 million and more into individual economic development projects in certain parts of the state. Keep in mind this program is for three counties. The program that is in place has been very helpful and working well.

If you look at the reports, you will see that much has been accomplished. Many jobs have been created and much in the way of tax base increases. The year before the bill we have in place now passed, the Budget and Taxation Committee passed it for \$100 million.

Again, we have made a lot of progress, and if we can continue at \$10 million a year until 2031, we can become a bright spot in the State of Maryland. I thank all of you who were involved in the passing of the present bill and hope that you can support the new proposals SB861 and HB1459. If you would like anything further from me, just let me know. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

George C. Edwards

Chairman, Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board