

SB0859 – BeTheChangeBmore - Favorable

My name is Mary Jo Kirschman. I am a resident of District 43 and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of BeTheChangeBmore, in support of SB 856, The Fair Share for Maryland Act. BTC reaches over 1200 Marylanders who work on campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice. We have been standing together to support progressive candidates and legislation since 2016.

But SB 856 is not just a political issue, but is also personal. I have lived in Maryland for all but 6 of my 78 years, 55 of them in Baltimore City and before that in Baltimore County. My daughter and her family live and vote in Silver Spring.

Our children attended Baltimore City Public Schools. Next year our grandson will start kindergarten in Silver Spring. We all pay taxes to the state, in return for the services our great state provides: schools, safety, roads, parks, sanitation, transportation, support for the arts, and so much more.

We love living in Baltimore and in Montgomery County. But despite being a wealthy state, the state suffers from huge income, health and educational disparities between rich and poor and a middle class that's barely hanging on. Impending budget cuts threatened by evil winds blowing from Washington will make these inequalities so much greater.

We cannot move forward as a state, grow our population, or even preserve what we have, without increasing revenues. We cannot cut our way to a balanced budget, without causing enormous pain to our citizens, which will reverberate for years. The Fair Share Act will help stem the pending disaster that is our state budget. It would add well over one and a half billion dollars to the state treasury, primarily by creating requiring the super wealthy to pay more, and the huge corporations to pay to do business here, as our small entrepreneurs have always had to do.

BeTheChange activists understand that the Fair Share Act is a just and fair way to bring desperately needed funds into the state coffers. As someone who has benefitted by living here, I would gladly pay additional taxes to fully fund critical services and obligations like the Blueprint. But the tax system here is upside down. Corporations operating in Maryland right now are able to avoid paying *their* fair share by using LLC status and other loopholes. Other states have closed these tax avoidance schemes – it is past time for Maryland to do the same.

BeTheChangeBmore has made the Fair Share Act its priority for the 2025 legislative session. It is unusual for us to select just one issue. But we understand that if Maryland doesn't have money in the budget, many of the other vital services, programs and justice initiatives we support will die.