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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Chair, Transportation
and the Environment



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and esteemed members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am Delegate Courtney Watson, House Chair of the Joint Committee on the Management of Public Funds. I am here today to present House Bill 990, As a Joint Committee Bill titled, “Municipal Appointees and Employees - Financial Oversight – Required Education and Experience.” I respectfully urge this committee to issue a favorable report on this critical piece of legislation.

The purpose of House Bill 990 is straightforward: it ensures that individuals serving in financial oversight roles within our municipalities possess the necessary education, experience, and ongoing training to perform their duties effectively. By requiring relevant degrees or certifications, prior professional experience, and continuing education, this bill seeks to standardize the qualifications of financial oversight professionals and align with best practices in governance. These provisions are essential for safeguarding taxpayer dollars and enhancing transparency and accountability in local governments. Maryland’s 157 municipalities collectively manage substantial public funds, often responsible for essential services such as public safety, infrastructure, and community programs. Unfortunately, lapses in financial oversight and inconsistent auditing practices have led to cases of financial mismanagement, as documented in recent reports by the Department of Legislative Services, Office of Legislative Audits. For example, as of July 2023, 19 municipalities failed to submit their required audit reports for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, with several also missing prior year filings. Such gaps not only compromise transparency but also heighten the risk of errors or fraud.

To address these challenges, House Bill 990 mandates that appointees and employees responsible for municipal finances meet baseline educational and professional criteria. This ensures that qualified and competent individuals oversee the management of public funds. Furthermore, the bill establishes requirements for continuing education, ensuring that financial officers stay informed about evolving best practices and regulatory standards. The Legislative Auditor will also monitor compliance, including this information in annual reports to further promote accountability. This legislation is a necessary step to rebuild and sustain public trust in local governance. When citizens know their municipal finances are being managed by qualified professionals, they feel more confident in their leaders and the services they provide. House Bill 990 also positions Maryland as a leader in financial governance by aligning our practices with national standards, such as those recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association.

I urge this committee to support House Bill 990 with a favorable report. Together, we can ensure that Maryland's municipalities are financially secure, transparent, and well-governed. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

M. Courtney Watson

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