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Walter L. Simmons, President

Bill Number:	Senate Bill 365
Title:	Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established
Committee:	Finance
Hearing Date:	February 13, 2025
Position:	FAVORABLE

Employ Prince George's, Inc. ("EPG") is a nonprofit organization that serves as the principal workforce development entity for Prince George's County and is responsible for regulating policy development and the administration of workforce activities related to services and programs funded by the federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA). As a nonprofit that engages in public-private partnerships and serves as a convener for over 100 nonprofit organizations, we have firsthand experience with the challenges associated with state grant funding.

Senate Bill 365 proposes the establishment of a "navigator" within the Maryland Department of Commerce to address critical issues in the state grant-making process. This position would play a vital role in facilitating communication between nonprofits and state agencies, ensuring efficient processing of grant awards, and providing much-needed clarity on funding mechanisms.

Despite being a relatively large and well-resourced nonprofit, EPG has encountered significant barriers in accessing state capital grants. If not for our internal capacity and dedicated administrative resources, we would face extreme difficulties in navigating the complexities of receiving funds awarded through state legislation. Even with experience and institutional knowledge, it remains challenging to identify the appropriate channels for grant disbursement and the specific individuals responsible for processing payments. This issue is magnified for smaller nonprofits that lack the infrastructure to overcome such obstacles.

As a convener of nonprofits, we have heard from countless partners struggling with similar issues. Many nonprofits in our network face daunting challenges, including:

- Identifying available state grants and understanding eligibility criteria.
- Navigating the disbursement process for awarded funds, often facing prolonged delays.
- Determining which state officials or agencies are responsible for different aspects of grant administration.
- Understanding how enacted legislation impacts their operations and funding opportunities.

These challenges create unnecessary financial strain on nonprofits that are dedicated to serving Maryland residents. Delayed payments and bureaucratic confusion hinder their ability to deliver critical services in workforce development, education, healthcare, housing, and other essential sectors.

By establishing a navigator to streamline these processes and advocate for nonprofit interests within the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council, SB 365 offers a practical and impactful solution. This measure would improve the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of state funding, enabling nonprofits to focus on their missions rather than grappling with administrative roadblocks. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 365.