

Employ Prince George's - SB 365 Testimony - FAV.pd

Uploaded by: Ardy Kamali

Position: FAV



EMPLOY PRINCE GEORGE'S
1801 McCormick Drive, Suite 400,
Largo, Maryland 20774
www.employpg.org
(301) 618-8400

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.

Testimony of Elise Saltzberg in favor of SB 365.pd

Uploaded by: Elise Saltzberg

Position: FAV



To: Senate Finance Committee

For: SB 365 Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established

Date: February 10, 2025

Testimony of: Elise Saltzberg, Saltzberg Consulting

Contact information: 410-486-3603 (office) 410-236-0758 (cell)

elise@saltzbergconsulting.com

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in favor of establishing a Nonprofit Navigator within the Department of Commerce.

I have worked as a fundraising consultant for dozens of nonprofit organizations in Maryland since 2000, and I am submitting testimony on their behalf – as well as on behalf of the 40,000+ other nonprofits in the State of Maryland. With my assistance, over the years my clients have applied for and received dozens of grants and contracts from various state and local agencies and departments.

That's the good news. The bad news is that my clients – any many other nonprofit organizations that I hear about – often run into issues that come up throughout the grants process. Some of the challenges that we have encountered include:

- An application process that is confusing, opaque, sometimes even nonsensical.
- Grant awards that are extremely slow to be processed – sometimes taking several years (yes years!)
- Reimbursements that are extremely slow to be processed – usually taking 4-5 months and sometimes even longer.

Here are just two examples:

- One of my clients was awarded a State bond initiative for capital improvements to their facility in June 2022. Many, many months went by over the next two years, during which time DGS staff were either unhelpful or unresponsive. The Maryland Historic Trust had already given approval for rehabilitation of the site, so this was one hurdle that my client did not have to overcome. All paperwork finally was approved in summer 2024, at which point my client was told that they had to start all over again in the fall and submit the same paperwork through the new grants portal. That was completed towards the end of 2024 and we were told that the next step would be to have the grant award go before the Board of Public Works. We have heard nothing since then.

- Another client has a Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center grant from the Maryland State Department of Education. As of today, they are still waiting for reimbursement for invoices submitted last summer. This is not a new problem – MSDE has been slow with my client’s reimbursements for years. These long overdue payments make it extremely difficult for the organization – and other organizations like them – to cover their ongoing expenses without running into cash flow and other financial challenges.

The result of all of these delays is that my clients and many other nonprofit organizations spend lots of time on logistical challenges that have nothing to do with running their programs and delivering their services to Marylanders in need. Having a Nonprofit Navigator – someone who can provide technical assistance and guide them through the challenges and complexities of government grants and contracts would be so very helpful.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony.

SB 365 - SUPP - FIN - Nonprofit Navigator.pdf

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV



marylandnonprofits.org

1500 Union Avenue | Suite 2500 | Baltimore, MD 21211
410.727.6367 | 800.273.6367 | Fax 410.235.2190

February 12, 2025

Testimony on Senate Bill 365
Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established
Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of nonprofit organizations and institutions of all sizes serving Marylanders and communities across the entire state. We urge you to act favorably on Senate Bill 365 that would create the position of Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce.

There are over 40,000 nonprofit organizations in Maryland, that together account for about 13% of all private employment in the state. However the vast majority of these are either all-volunteer or operate with only a handful of professional staff. As in the case of for-profit small businesses, it is often difficult for them to identify or access government programs or grants opportunities that could provide critical assistance in growing or even sustaining their organizations.

Even larger nonprofits that regularly provide important services on behalf of government at all levels often struggle with complexities of the bureaucratic structures that delay approvals of contracts or grant agreements, and even then, delayed payments for services provided.

The position of Nonprofit Navigator established under Senate Bill 365 will help to resolve these issues, by:

- providing technical assistance in accessing and applying for grant programs,
- working with both nonprofits and governmental units to resolve delays and complexities,
- collecting and sharing information on government programs and funding opportunities, and
- representing nonprofits' interests and concerns as a member of the MD Efficient Grants Application ("MEGA") Council.

Like many other small businesses, nonprofits must plan and manage their operations, finances, and recruit, retain and pay their employees. They experienced the same economic hardships and dislocations as others during and recovering from the pandemic. They have also seen declines in support from charitable contributions in recent years. A "Navigator" to assist them in dealing with state or other government agencies would improve their ability to provide services and assistance in communities across the state.

We thank you for your consideration and strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 365.



LCPCM-SB 365 Department of Commerce - Nonprofit Or

Uploaded by: John Favazza

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill: SB 365 Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established

Hearing Date: February 13, 2025

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) support SB 365 Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established. This bill will establish a nonprofit organizations navigator with the Department of Commerce to provide technical assistance to nonprofit organizations in obtaining access to and applying for State grant programs. The navigator will also work to bring efficiencies to the grant-making process and collect and share information on opportunities for federal, State, and local grants with nonprofit organizations.

SB 365 also adds the nonprofit organizations navigator as a member of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council (MEGA), a group created in 2020 to create standards and develop efficiencies within the state grant-making process.

LCPCM supports the creation of the navigator to complement the ongoing work of MEGA by focusing on helping nonprofits access programs as well as help resolve delays and other everyday problems nonprofits may encounter.

For these reasons, LCPCM urges the Committee to give SB 365 a FAVORABLE Report.

Please contact Andrea Mansfield at amansfield@maniscanning.com or (410) 562-1617 if we can provide additional information.

SB 365 - MNADV - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Laure Ruth

Position: FAV



BILL NO: Senate Bill 365
TITLE: Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator –
Established
COMMITTEE: Finance
HEARING DATE: February 13, 2025
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the COMMITTEE to favorably Report on SB 365.**

Senate Bill 365 that would create the position of Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce. There are over 40,000 nonprofit organizations in Maryland, that together account for about 13% of all private employment in the state. Small nonprofits have difficulty identifying or accessing government programs or grants opportunities that could provide critical assistance in growing or even sustaining their organizations. Even larger nonprofits that regularly provide important services on behalf of government at all levels often struggle with complexities of the bureaucratic structures that delay approvals of contracts or grant agreements.

A nonprofit navigator will help to resolve these issues, by doing several things, including:

- providing technical assistance in accessing and applying for grant programs;
- working with both nonprofits and governmental units to resolve delays and complexities;
- collecting and sharing information on government programs and funding opportunities; and
- representing nonprofits' interests and concerns as a member of the MD Efficient Grants Application ("MEGA") Council.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on SB365.**

SB 365_Testimony in support.pdf

Uploaded by: Lois Mikkila

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 365

Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator -- Established

Senate Finance Committee
February 13, 2025

Testimony in Support

The Association of Community Services (ACS) of Howard County, a 501c3 nonprofit, is a membership organization serving nonprofit agencies in our community. Our nonprofit members provide critical services ranging from mentoring to food assistance, housing, legal services, transportation, and more.

Most nonprofits in our county are small. About a third of our members, for example, report budgets under \$100k; nearly half report budgets under \$500,000. This means they are functioning with at most 3-4 staff; many are all volunteer or have only one paid staff person.

Nonprofits of all sizes often struggle with navigating the complex structure of State government, making it difficult to identify potential funding opportunities, obtain technical assistance, meet reporting requirements, and resolve any delays in payments. But it is especially burdensome for small nonprofits – the majority of our sector – that lack the past experience or the current capacity to navigate the bureaucracy effectively. As a result, they may waste precious time or miss out on opportunities entirely.

A “navigator” within State Government to assist nonprofits in dealing with the various agencies would improve their ability to access state programs and funding, which would in turn improve their ability to provide the essential services our county residents rely upon.

We strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 365. Thank you.

Submitted by,

Lois K Mikkila

Lois K Mikkila
Executive Director
Association of Community Services of Howard County
lois.mikkila@acshoco.org
443-518-7701

2.11 SB 365- Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Or

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



SB 365 - Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established
Senate Finance Committee
February 13, 2025
SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 365.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland is a nonprofit that promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy.

Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.

CASH is one of over 40,000 nonprofit organizations in Maryland, which together account for about 13% of all private employment in the state. Many nonprofits are either all-volunteer or operate with only a handful of staff. It is difficult to identify or access government programs or grants opportunities that could provide critical assistance in growing or even sustaining nonprofit organizations.

Even larger nonprofits that regularly provide important services on behalf of government at all levels often struggle with complexities of the bureaucratic structures that delay approvals of contracts or grant agreements, and even then, payments for services provided.

The position of Nonprofit Navigator established under Senate Bill 365 will help to resolve these issues, by:

- providing technical assistance in accessing and applying for grant programs,
- working with both nonprofits and governmental units to resolve delays and complexities,
- collecting and sharing information on government programs and funding opportunities, and
- representing nonprofits' interests and concerns as a member of the MD Efficient Grants Application ("MEGA") Council.

CASH receives federal and state funding that flows through state agencies, academic institutions, and non-profit intermediaries. After an initial invoice, payments can take anywhere from thirty days to six months. Unfortunately, the payments can be inconsistent with invoice amounts due to undisclosed offset liabilities. Like many other small businesses, nonprofits must plan and manage their operations, finances, and recruit, retain and pay their employees. We've experienced the same economic hardships and dislocations as others during and after the pandemic. A "Navigator" to assist us in dealing with state or other government agencies would improve our ability to provide services and assistance in communities across the state.



Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 365.

SB365 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Madelin Martinez

Position: FAV

SB365
Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established
Senate Finance Committee
February 13th, 2025
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports Senate Bill 365, which would create the position of Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

Catholic Charities applauds this bill's recognition of the issues and delays involved in the State of Maryland's grant-making process, and we support the addition of a Nonprofit Organizations Navigator position to help resolve these issues.

Catholic Charities, as with other non-profits throughout the state, relies heavily on grant funding to support our programs and services. We are fortunate enough to have staff who can dedicate their time to researching and preparing grant applications, and their experience is reflected here in this testimony. They report issues with the following: contradictory or unclear technical instructions around grant application requirement; lack of responsiveness or any form of contact from State staff members; inconsistent claims from State staff members that our renewal grant applications were not received; short-notice due dates; and incorrect payments. Staff in our finance department report issues with payment, including most recently, receipt of a grant payment check that was issued to the incorrect program, with no accompanying documentation or clarification, requiring significant staff time to sort out which program the funds were supposed to be applied to. Our organization would benefit from additional navigator support, especially regarding these offices: Maryland DHS, DHCD, CHRC, and DGS.

Passing this bill will help ensure that the State of Maryland is a faithful steward of funding and is effectively supporting Maryland residents through state grant funds. That goal of local financial fidelity is becoming more and more important with the current federal policy changes around federal grant access. As the largest non-profit human services provider in the state of Maryland, and the largest Head Start licensee in the state, Associated Catholic Charities Inc. knows that every awarded grant dollar has been fought for and proven necessary, and there should be no unnecessary barriers to receiving awarded grant funds. The State of Maryland should be a model State in terms of how funding is handled and distributed, and this new Navigator position will be an asset to the State's various funding offices, nonprofits, and residents.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB365.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

Testimony - Nonprofit Navigator.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

—
Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

—
Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB365: Nonprofit Navigator
Senate Finance Committee
Thursday, February 13, 2025 1:00 PM

The nonprofit sector accounts for 13% of Maryland’s workforce. There are more than 40,000 organizations that provide food, shelter, and safety to our communities. This sector is disproportionately affected by these turbulent times. [SB365](#) would offer a reasonable modicum of assistance by employing ONE PERSON to ensure nonprofits have the support they need to continue serving our communities effectively.

Preliminary research from Maryland Nonprofits has identified at least 18 “Ombudsmen” positions across State government, serving in the Departments of Aging, Education, Human Services, Transportation, and elsewhere. These employees advocate and provide support in various areas of government.

The “Nonprofit Navigator” position created by this bill could:

- Help nonprofits understand and access federal, State, and local grant programs;
- Resolve delays in grant funding, making sure that State dollars reach their intended use more efficiently (without legislation like our 2023 Prompt Payment Parity Law);
- Represent nonprofit interests across State agencies, ensuring that policies and programs neither undermine nor overlook the sector; and
- Manage the Nonprofit, Interest-Free, Micro Bridge Loan Account (NIMBL) program.

The Department of Commerce already employs a Director of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Outreach; the proposed Nonprofit Navigator simply would do the same for 501(c)(3)s. The Navigator would also enhance the nonprofit perspective on the Maryland Efficient Grant Application (M.E.G.A.) Council.

The low cost of this singular position would repay itself many times over by boosting nonprofit organizations’ effectiveness; aid in troubleshooting; and access to funds and resources in order to serve the needs of Maryland and its residents.

There is an amendment to make this emergency legislation, with the position starting no later than July 1, 2025.

Nonprofits are our vital partners, weaving our safety net and enhancing the quality of life for our residents. We prioritize this partnership through our myriad grant programs-- and this funding will only become more important with the cuts and chaos wrought by the Trump administration.

Let's supercharge our ability to get services to our communities through our nonprofit partners!

I urge a favorable report on SB365 as amended.

CLC Written Testimony SB 365 Nonprofit Organizatio

Uploaded by: Shana Roth-Gormley

Position: FAV



SB 365

Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established

Hearing before the Senate Finance Committee

Feb. 13, 2025

POSITION: Favorable

Community Law Center (CLC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is a legal partner to Maryland neighborhoods and nonprofits in pursuit of more just and vibrant communities. CLC provides direct legal representation to communities and nonprofits on issues like tax exemption and organizational governance, real estate, contracts, intellectual property, employment law, and more. We advocate on issues that impact our Maryland neighborhood and nonprofit clients, including to reform the tax sale system and to prevent and remediate property vacancy and abandonment.

CLC supports SB 365 in creating a Nonprofit Organizations Navigator to provide technical assistance to nonprofits, support nonprofits in applying for state grant programs, and provide information to nonprofits on grant opportunities.

Our nonprofit organization clients would benefit significantly from a centralized state organization that can provide information on grant opportunities. Many of our clients are small, grassroots nonprofit organizations run by volunteers that are working hard to address problems and provide support in their communities. They are always looking for resources and funding opportunities to make their work possible and to grow and expand. Having a Nonprofit Organizations Navigator would help these organizations find resources they might not otherwise have access to, and help them achieve their missions that strengthen Maryland communities and support our residents.

For nonprofits that receive grants through Maryland state programs, SB 365 would assist when these organizations encounter delays and issues with state grant making. CLC itself as a nonprofit organization would benefit from this assistance – like many other Maryland nonprofits, CLC relies on funding from the state of Maryland to support our programming and provide assistance to communities and nonprofit organizations. We are currently working to resolve a technical issue related to a state grant involving DocuSign, and having a Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce would be a welcome resource to turn to in resolving this purely technical issue with receiving a grant disbursement so that we can continue to provide legal services to our clients.

We urge a favorable report on SB 365. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the above reasons,

CLC urges a FAVORABLE VOTE ON SB 365.

Please contact Shana Roth-Gormley, Staff Attorney at Community Law Center, with any questions.

ShanaR@communitylaw.org | 410-366-0922 x 118

SB365_MARFY_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



February 13, 2025

Senate Bill 365 - Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established

Senate Finance Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the adoptive and foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

We strongly support Senate Bill 365, legislation that will significantly enhance the ability of nonprofit organizations to serve communities across Maryland by streamlining access to vital state grants and funding opportunities. As many of our members are nonprofits, we urge the General Assembly to pass this critical legislation to ensure that charitable organizations can continue their essential work with efficiency and effectiveness.

Nonprofit organizations are the lifeblood of our communities, providing services ranging from child welfare services to housing assistance and food security to healthcare, education, and workforce development. Despite their importance, many nonprofits struggle with cumbersome and inefficient grant application processes, which hinder their ability to secure funding and allocate resources where they are most needed.

By establishing the Nonprofit Organizations Navigator, this bill will provide nonprofits with technical assistance to navigate complex grant processes, reducing administrative burdens and allowing them to focus on service delivery. Additionally, many smaller nonprofits, particularly those serving marginalized and low-income communities, lack the staffing and expertise to effectively apply for state grants. The navigator's role in offering guidance and sharing funding opportunities will level the playing field for these vital organizations.

Lastly, Senate Bill 365 supports economic growth and community stability. Nonprofits are not just service providers—they are economic drivers, employing thousands of Marylanders and contributing to the state's overall economic well-being. Ensuring they have access to the necessary funding will bolster community resilience and maintain essential social services.

Senate Bill 365 is not just a policy improvement—it is a lifeline for the nonprofit sector and the countless individuals and families who rely on their services. By passing this bill, Maryland will demonstrate its commitment to supporting nonprofits, strengthening community partnerships, and fostering an equitable grant distribution system.

We respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 365 and ensure its passage into law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

For more information call or email:

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com

RJR-(WMSR) Senate Bill 365.House Bill 541- Departm

Uploaded by: Wesley Heinz

Position: FAV



Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 365/House Bill 541: Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established. SUPPORT

February 13, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Beidle and Senate Finance Committee Members:

On behalf of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and our board members, I write this letter in support of *Senate Bill 365/House Bill 541: Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established*.

As written, SB365/HB541, would establish a nonprofit organizations navigator within the Department of Commerce to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations. Specifically, this new position would:

- (1) provide technical assistance to nonprofit organizations in obtaining access to and applying for state grant programs;*
- (2) work with nonprofits and units of State government to resolve complexities and delays in State grant-making processes;*
- (3) collect and share certain information; and*
- (3) represent nonprofits interest and concerns as a member of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council.*

The WMSR has been providing railroad excursions for over 30 years in the heart of Mountain Maryland, with a focus on heritage railroading through preservation, restoration, operation, education, and visitor experience. Our railroad is a destination for travelers from across the globe and is a vital component of the economy in the Cumberland, MD-WV Metropolitan Statistical Area. The historic steam locomotive #1309, has become the star of our collection and has been attracting visitors and regional citizenry to Western Maryland since the Spring of 2022. Since 1988, guests have enjoyed various revenue-generating events as the railroad's culture has changed over 37 years.

There are numerous reasons for the continued growth and success of our organization, including the ongoing financial support by the Administration and the Maryland General Assembly. Through the

state's investments in operational and capital funding, WMSR serves as a foundation for tourism, hospitality, and commerce in Western Maryland through employee development, providing a world-class visitor experience, and driving economic impact for the future.

The rising costs continue to plague the Railroad's operational and maintenance needs. For WMSR to sustain its daily services, our railroad construction consultants have indicated a need for approximately \$3 million to bring our track/right-of-way to Class 2 standards, and an annual need of \$1 million to keep the railroad in a good state of repair.

On an annual basis, the Railroad lobbies for state assistance and pursues every meaningful grant opportunity that is available. With that said, these tasks can be complex and overwhelming for both staff and volunteers. The process of searching for viable state grants and completing the stages of receiving state grants requires persistent communications and time between the Railroad and our grant contacts within the Department of Legislative Services and the Executive Secretary's Office for the Board of Public Works.

With the establishment of non-profit navigator, it would provide a direct point of contact for organizations, like WMSR, that still have difficulties searching for new funding sources or requiring support throughout the grant approval process. In short, the new navigator would be an integral connection between the Department and non-profit organizations statewide and a needed voice on the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council.

It is for these reasons that WMSR proudly supports the passage of this legislation and respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 365/ House Bill 541 by this committee.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at wheinz@wmsr.com.

Regards,



Wesley Heinz
Executive Director
Western Maryland Scenic Railroad Development Corporation
www.wmsr.com