



HB 1248: Maryland Workforce Retention, Recruitment, and Reentry Act

House Appropriations Committee

FAVORABLE

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Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and esteemed members of the House Appropriations Committee: my name is Monica Schaeffer, Ph.D. and I am honored to have the opportunity to testify in support of HB1248.

I currently serve on the Employment Work group for Montgomery County's Age-Friendly Initiative. I am an active alumnus of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging on which I served for 6 years. I am speaking on behalf of the Montgomery County's Age-Friendly Initiative. As a research health psychologist and gerontologist, consulting now for the globally recognized Age-Friendly Institute and the national Encore Network, I am keenly interested and involved in how individuals and organizations can thrive in the 21st century longevity economy.

HB 1248 establishes a pilot program that will evaluate full time position vacancies in 5 different State agencies for conversion to two part-time benefitted roles. Passage of HB1248 could help to address labor shortages by recruiting and retaining a talented, often overlooked and underutilized, labor pipeline of older adults and others, including current State employees, who are interested in phased retirement and/or find it difficult or impossible to work full time.

AARP projects that the 50+ age group will grow from 36% to 40% of the Maryland population by 2050 and will be a significant economic engine for the State. Governor Moore's *Longevity Ready Maryland* 10-year plan/initiative (of which I am a member of the Economic Opportunity Committee) recognizes the wealth of talent, experience, skills and institutional knowledge of the 50+ population and the need for improving economic opportunities for older workers. HB1248 will help to implement new employment pathways for workers of all ages who both need to and want to work for financial stability as well as for continued engagement and purpose. State government will lead by example in making Maryland longevity ready.

By 2034, for the first time in American history, there will be more people over 65 years of age than children under 18, according to the US Census Bureau. While birth rates are declining to the lowest level in US history, 10,000 Americans are turning 65 every day and many are ready to delay retirement for 5+ years in exchange for flexibility. Providing flexibility ensures not only a smooth transfer of skills and critical knowledge, but also opportunities for mentoring across generations. Bringing together workers



at different life stages will promote the co-generation of ideas and strategies for innovating how we work in the 21st century.

This aging demographic shift has changed the landscape of the traditional retirement years, namely the realization that the 55+ population both want to and need to work, and that there are not enough young people in the talent pipeline to fill all the vacancies. Even with automation and AI, labor shortages are predicted in the next decade. Yet 65% of US workers age 50+ say age bias is a fact of life in the workplace and cite lack of attractive opportunities and difficulty in landing jobs.

We support and urge favorable consideration of HB 1248 because this legislation positions the State government to pilot a program that would help to address workforce inclusivity, foster economic growth for the State and economic opportunity for older workers, while supporting the talents and contributions of older workers and enhancing the well-being of all workers.

Thank you.