

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross

Councilwoman At Large, City of Glenarden, Maryland

Testimony on Senate Bill 284 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2026

Determination: Favorable with Amendments

Chair and Members of the Committee, I submit this testimony grounded in my service as a municipal leader, veteran, and advocate for transparent and responsible governance. Senate Bill 284 presents a comprehensive fiscal framework intended to stabilize state finances while addressing competing priorities across education, public safety, health, and local government operations.

The overall direction of the legislation reflects responsible fiscal stewardship and recognizes the need to maintain essential programs that support working families, students, and community stability. Provisions supporting behavioral health coordination, public safety operations, reentry employment incentives, and investments tied to economic mobility align with the realities municipalities confront daily.

However, several components shift financial responsibility to counties and local governments without sufficient guardrails or phased implementation support. Municipalities already operating under constrained revenue structures may experience unintended strain that ultimately impacts residents through reduced services or delayed infrastructure investment.

Areas of concern include increased county cost participation requirements tied to assisted outpatient treatment programs, adjustments affecting education and community college funding growth, and reductions or caps in certain workforce and public safety support programs. Local governments depend on predictable state partnership to sustain frontline delivery of services.

Amendments are recommended to ensure balanced implementation. First, require fiscal impact reporting and consultation with affected counties prior to full cost transfer provisions. Second, establish a phased schedule or temporary state matching mechanism when new reimbursement obligations are imposed on counties. Third, protect baseline funding stability for workforce development and education programs that directly support upward mobility and regional economic competitiveness.

These amendments preserve the intent of fiscal responsibility while ensuring that local governments remain capable partners in delivering outcomes residents expect. Strong state policy succeeds when implementation realities at the municipal level are fully considered.

Based on my experience managing municipal operations and advocating for accountability and transparency, Senate Bill 284 is supportable with the proposed amendments. With these adjustments, the legislation can advance fiscal stability without weakening local capacity or community service delivery.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a Favorable with Amendments report on Senate Bill 284.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross