



Gino Renne, President
Lisa Blackwell-Brown, Secretary-Treasurer
Lisa Titus, Recorder

**UFCW LOCAL
1994 MCGEO**

A VOICE FOR WORKING AMERICA

SB 520 - Property Tax – Charter Counties – Application of County Tax Limitation on Public Safety Budget

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 24, 2026

SUPPORT

Lisa Titus, Recorder, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO

On behalf of **UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO**, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of **SB0520**, which provides charter counties with a narrowly tailored mechanism to exceed property tax limitations for the express purpose of funding approved public safety budgets.

UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO represents thousands of public service workers across Montgomery County, including Sheriff's Office personnel, 911 Emergency Communications Specialists, Officers in the Department of Corrections, and frontline employees within the Department of Health and Human Services. Our members are the people residents depend on in moments of crisis — answering emergency calls, ensuring public safety in our courts and communities, and providing essential mental health services to vulnerable populations.

SB0520 acknowledges a growing reality faced by charter counties across Maryland: the increasing demand for emergency response, behavioral health services, crisis intervention, and public safety infrastructure often outpaces the rigid revenue limitations imposed by charter tax caps. While these limitations were established with the intent of fiscal restraint, they were not designed to account for the evolving and complex public safety challenges facing modern local governments.

Public safety is not limited to law enforcement and firefighting. It includes:

- The 911 professionals who serve as the first point of contact in emergencies;
- Sheriff's deputies who ensure safety in our courts and transport systems, help domestic violence victims, assist those in mental health crisis, and apprehend fugitives;



301-977-2447



600 S. Frederick Ave. | Gaithersburg, MD



info@mcgeo.org

- Health and Human Services personnel who respond to mental health crises, support victims of domestic violence, and protect children and seniors from abuse and neglect.

Each of these functions plays a critical role in preserving the safety and stability of our communities. Yet too often, local governments are forced to choose between maintaining adequate staffing levels in emergency communications centers, investing in behavioral health crisis response, or preserving core services that prevent emergencies from escalating in the first place.

SB0520 offers a responsible and transparent solution by allowing a county's governing body — through a simple public and accountable vote — to exceed charter-imposed property tax limitations when necessary to fund approved public safety expenditures. This authority ensures that counties are not constrained from making timely investments in the workforce, infrastructure, and services required to respond effectively to emergencies and community safety needs.

Importantly, SB0520 does not mandate any tax increase. Rather, it restores flexibility to local elected officials to respond to demonstrable public safety needs without delay, ensuring continuity of operations in critical service areas such as emergency dispatch, judicial security, crisis response, and protective services.

As public safety demands continue to evolve, counties must retain the ability to make strategic investments in the personnel and programs that safeguard their residents. SB0520 provides a balanced framework that respects local governance while ensuring that vital public safety services — including those delivered by our members — are not compromised by outdated fiscal constraints.

For these reasons, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO urges a **favorable report** on SB0520.