



Delegate Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, Vice-Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 461/Senate Bill 300: Economic Development - Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund – Establishment – SUPPORT

February 17, 2026

Dear Chairwoman Valderrama, Vice-Chair Charkoudian, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the various nonprofit organizations and municipalities located in rural Maryland that I represent in Annapolis, I write this letter to proudly support HB461/SB 300; entitled: *Economic Development - Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund – Establishment*.

As written, HB461/SB 300 proposes to establish the Rural Readiness Program. Administered by the Rural Maryland Council, this new program will provide much-needed assistance to increase economic viability and growth throughout our State's rural communities. Participation and completion in this program will give eligible applicants priority consideration to various established funding sources through the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund and the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund.

If enacted, HB461/SB300 would also establish the Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund that will offer grants to support planning and building initiatives to advance efforts in addressing the needs of these rural communities, such as housing, energy, workforce, infrastructure, and workforce development.

This legislation is critical for several key reasons. Supporting Senate Bill 300 is crucial for several reasons:

- (1) The Rural Readiness Program aims to improve the economic development capabilities of rural communities, which is essential for their long-term growth and prosperity.*
- (2) The program ensures that rural communities receive the necessary support and resources to address their specific economic development needs.*
- (3) The Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund encourages collaborative planning and initiatives that address unique challenges and opportunities within rural communities.*

(4) By providing grants and assistance, the program helps small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural areas to thrive and contribute to the local economy.

(5) The establishment of the program promotes rural entrepreneurship, which is a key strategy for economic development in rural communities.

Supporting these initiatives not only benefits the communities directly but also contributes to the overall economic health and stability of Maryland.

It is for these reasons, we proudly support the passage of this legislation and respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 461/ Senate Bill 300 by this committee.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Reinhardt, II

Richard J. Reinhardt, II
Partner
Percy Public Affairs

List of Clients who Benefit of the Passage of HB461/SB300

Allegany Museum
Allegany Co. Historical Society
City of Cumberland
City of Frostburg
Western Maryland Scenic Railroad
YMCA of the Chesapeake