



House Bill 461

Position: Favorable

Committee: Economic Matters

Date: February 17, 2026

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (“Maryland Chamber”) is a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and opportunity for all Marylanders.

House Bill 461 (HB 461) establishes the Rural Readiness Program and the Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund, both to be administered by the Rural Maryland Council. These initiatives are practical, forward-looking tools that will help rural communities build the planning capacity, partnerships, and organizational strength necessary to compete effectively for state and federal economic development resources.

Many of our members operate in counties where limited staffing and financial constraints make it difficult to pursue complex grant opportunities or undertake long-term strategic planning. As a result, rural communities often miss out on funding that could support job creation, infrastructure improvements, broadband expansion, and business growth. By investing in readiness and capacity building, HB461 addresses this gap at its root. **For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 461.**