



February 17, 2026

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: Economic Development - Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund - Establishment - SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

The Allegany Museum respectfully submits this statement for the record in strong support of House Bill 461, which establishes a Rural Readiness Program in Maryland. As a cultural institution serving Allegany County and the broader Western Maryland region, we have witnessed firsthand the unique challenges and untapped potential of our rural communities.

BACKGROUND AND POSITION

HB461 represents a critical investment in the future of rural Maryland. Our region possesses rich cultural heritage, natural resources, and hardworking communities, yet we often lack the infrastructure, training programs, and economic development support available to our urban counterparts. The Rural Readiness Program would address these disparities by providing targeted resources to strengthen workforce development, support small businesses, and build community capacity in areas like Allegany County.

From our perspective as a museum, we understand that thriving rural communities require more than preservation of the past—they need tools and opportunities to build sustainable futures.

KEY BENEFITS OF HB461

This legislation would provide critical support in the following areas:

- **Workforce Development:** Enhance workforce training and career readiness for rural residents, particularly our young people who often must leave the area to find opportunities
- **Economic Diversification:** Support economic diversification in communities that have faced industrial decline and changing economic landscapes
- **Community Infrastructure:** Strengthen the social and civic infrastructure that allows rural institutions like museums, libraries, and community centers to serve as anchors for their communities
- **Tailored Solutions:** Recognize that one-size-fits-all approaches do not work, and that rural areas require tailored solutions responsive to local needs and assets

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Allegany Museum serves as more than a repository of history—we are a gathering place, an educational resource, and a partner in community development. We have seen how strategic investments in rural communities create multiplier effects, supporting not just economic growth but also cultural vitality, civic engagement, and quality of life. HB461 would provide the framework and resources to amplify these positive impacts across rural Maryland.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

We respectfully urge the Maryland Senate to vote in favor of HB461 Rural Maryland communities like ours have much to contribute to our state's prosperity, and this legislation represents an important step toward ensuring we have the resources to do so.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation and for your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Christopher Logsdon
President
Allegany Museum