



March 5, 2026

Chair Pamela Beidle  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Cc: Vice Chair Antonio Hayes, Committee Members

I, Robert D. Braun, wish to convey my strong support for SB867 written by Senator Alonzo Washington. This bill would provide the necessary resources to the Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission (MATC) to execute its strategic plan to strengthen and integrate aerospace assets across our state and attract new businesses to Maryland.

SB867 will allow the commission to create Aerospace Technology Zones (ATZ), issue grants to attract and grow the aerospace industry, and hire key staff to execute operations. It is imperative that Maryland begins attracting more aerospace companies to grow this sector in the state and compete nationally, but it can't do so without the state-supported competitive advantages that SB867 would provide.

The MATC strategic plan calls for the creation of four ATZs in regions of Maryland that presently have aerospace assets – a Central ATZ, Western ATZ, Southern ATZ, and Eastern ATZ, each with specific core specialties. Combined, the ATZs will provide a synergy of capabilities to entice aerospace companies looking to locate, build, scale, and market their platforms. As the head of Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) Space Exploration Sector, I am personally interested in the Central ATZ which not only has APL located within, but also NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) and a large number of aerospace companies, including Northrop Grumman, KBR and Intuitive Machines. This region of Maryland has a long history of advancing critical new space technologies and scientific breakthroughs that impact U.S. economic and national security as well as the quality of life of many Marylanders. One example of this is the creation of satellite navigation by APL engineers in the 1960s that would eventually become GPS as we know it today. There are many other examples of space technologies, developed in central Maryland, bringing quality of life improvements to everyday citizens while spurring economic development across our nation.

Maryland can better capture the economic, security and societal benefits of space with the passage of SB867 to empower the MATC in creating ATZs, in coordination with our county economic development authorities, including those in Howard, Prince Georges, Montgomery, and Anne Arundel to attract commercial space companies to the region. States like Florida, Texas, California, Alabama, Mississippi, Colorado and Georgia have already taken such steps and are reaping the economic benefits. As a Marylander by birth and a lifelong space technologist, I can't stress enough how important it is that Maryland captures more of the growing commercial space sector. With support of the state, Central Maryland is ready and available today to achieve this goal.

In my view, the most important aspect of SB867 is the authorization and creation of MATC grant program. Without grant making authority and funding, the MATC ATZs will be inert. Other states that are successful in attracting the booming commercial aerospace companies are providing economic incentives backed by grants. From an aerospace perspective, Maryland has much going for it already. Nonetheless, many companies are making decisions today based on economic incentives provided by states and localities which Maryland has yet to do. We will not be successful in recruiting existing

aerospace companies to Maryland or growing aerospace startups without a grants program. The grant authority provided in this bill would allow MATC to not only create the ATZs, but back them with funding in coordination with county economic development authorities (EDAs), who from my talks with Central Maryland EDAs, already have plans to attract commercial space companies and are ready to begin once grant making abilities are authorized.

Lastly, SB867 would allow the creation of a Maryland Department of Commerce Executive Director to support MATC and execute its strategic plan. As you may know, MATC commissioners are all volunteers. A permanent, full-time director is crucial to carrying out the strategic plan, working with MATC commissioners, working with the state and county officials, and making Maryland successful in growing aerospace economic sectors within the ATZs.

I reiterate my full support for the passage of SB867 to provide the necessary resources to the MATC to make Maryland more competitive in growing its commercial aerospace sector. Across the U.S., commercial aerospace will continue to grow exponentially. Maryland has many assets to offer these companies, including a vibrant and well-educated workforce. All Marylanders will ultimately benefit from the economic impact of bringing more commercial aerospace companies to the state. Benefits include more high paying jobs, workforce development, increased state revenue, and increased quality of life. I urge swift passage of SB867 and look forward to working with the MATC to make Maryland a more prosperous and diversified aerospace state.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Braun  
Head, Space Exploration Sector