



Office of Tourism & Economic Development  
107 West Green Street, Snow Hill, MD 21863  
(410) 632-3112 • [www.MarylandsCoast.org](http://www.MarylandsCoast.org)

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
Chair, Economic Matters Committee  
230 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Pamela G. Beidle  
Chair, Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Valderrama, Chair Beidle, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Worcester County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, we write to express our favorable support for **SB 300/HB 461 – Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund**.

Worcester County supports SB 300 because it directly addresses one of the most significant challenges facing rural jurisdictions: limited local capacity to compete for and effectively deploy state and federal economic development resources. The establishment of the Rural Readiness Program, administered by the Rural Maryland Council, will provide rural communities with technical assistance and structured support to strengthen grant readiness, project development, and long-term planning efforts.

In addition, the creation of the Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund will allow eligible entities, including local governments and regional economic development organizations, to access competitive planning grants to advance critical initiatives in areas such as housing, workforce development, broadband, infrastructure, and community revitalization. These planning and capacity-building investments are essential precursors to successful capital projects and private-sector investment. Rural counties have a difficult time competing for funds with our urban counterparts. Our successes look different. For example, in rural counties, a 10–20 job gain can move the needle the same way a 200-job project does in urban Maryland.

From Worcester County's perspective, SB 300 will improve coordination between state and local partners, encourage multi-jurisdictional collaboration, and ensure that rural communities are better positioned to leverage future funding opportunities. The program's focus on readiness, accountability, and project sustainability aligns closely with how economic development actually occurs in rural Maryland.



Office of Tourism & Economic Development  
107 West Green Street, Snow Hill, MD 21863  
(410) 632-3112 • [www.MarylandsCoast.org](http://www.MarylandsCoast.org)

For these reasons, Worcester County respectfully requests a **favorable report on SB 300/HB 461** Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to strengthening Maryland's rural communities. Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie Pursel".

Melanie Pursel,  
Director of Tourism & Economic Development