



Senate Bill 300

Date: February 5, 2026

Committee: Finance

Position: Favorable

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

Senate Bill 300 (SB 300) establishes the Rural Readiness Program administered by the Rural Maryland Council to help rural communities build capacity for economic development. It would also create the Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund (the Fund) to support planning and collaborative efforts addressing needs in rural areas.

Rural communities play a vital role in Maryland's economy, supporting key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, tourism, and small business development. However, many rural jurisdictions face structural challenges that can limit their ability to compete for state and federal economic development resources, attract private investment, and advance large-scale projects.

SB 300 directly addresses these barriers by establishing the Rural Readiness Program within the Rural Maryland Council to help eligible organizations and local governments build the foundational capacity needed to pursue economic development opportunities. By supporting strategic planning and readiness efforts, the program will better position rural communities to develop revenue-generating projects, respond to funding opportunities, and leverage public and private investment.

In addition, the creation of the Fund will provide critical support for planning initiatives that address shared regional needs, including infrastructure, workforce development, housing, and economic resilience. These investments will help rural communities align local priorities with statewide economic goals while fostering stronger partnerships among local governments and businesses.

The Maryland Chamber believes that targeted capacity-building initiatives such as those proposed in SB 300 are essential to creating a more balanced and competitive statewide economy. By equipping rural communities with the tools and resources they need to succeed,

this legislation will benefit not only rural Maryland, but the state's broader business climate and workforce.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **favorable report** on **SB 300**.