



COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY

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February 4, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

Re: Senate Bill 300 - Economic Development – Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund – Establishment

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Beidle & Committee Members:

On behalf of Talbot County Maryland, we are pleased to express our **support** for Senate Bill 300 – Economic Development – Rural Readiness Program and Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund – Establishment. Talbot County is a rural Eastern Shore county with just over 38,000 residents, more than 600 miles of shoreline, and an economy built on agriculture, maritime industries, healthcare, tourism, financial services, and private sector business. While we are fortunate to have important strengths, we still face structural challenges that are common to rural Maryland communities.

The Rural Readiness Program and Building Fund, administered by the Rural Maryland Council, is a capacity-building tool that counties such as Talbot and our nonprofit partners can utilize for future economic growth. The program is designed to provide technical assistance to eligible rural communities in areas including:

- Assessing local economic development needs and opportunities.
- Developing competitive projects and investment strategies.
- Preparing and managing grant applications and implementation.

Senate Bill 300 sends an important signal that the State recognizes rural Maryland as a vital part of its economic future. Rural Maryland contributes significantly through agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare, but often does so with limited local fiscal capacity, making it difficult to compete with our more urban counterparts. State investments that build rural readiness are not simply assistance. They are strategic investments in the long-term competitiveness and resilience of the entire state.

The Talbot County Council respectfully urges a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 300. We look forward to continuing our work with the Rural Maryland Council and our state partners to make full use of the Rural Readiness Program and the Rural Maryland Capacity Building Fund to advance economic opportunity for our residents and for rural Maryland as a whole.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chuck F. Callahan
President