



DORCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

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March 9, 2026

Re: Favorable to SB539/HB1070 Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund

To the Members of the Finance Committee:

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the 480+ businesses that are members of the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce to support SB539/HB1070.

Senate Bill 539 makes a targeted and strategic investment facilitate employment across Maryland. At a time when workforce access is consistently cited as a top concern among employers, this legislation provides a practical and immediate solution by directly connecting jobseekers with businesses at no cost to employers.

More than 75% of CEOs identify talent availability as the primary factor influencing business growth decisions. In Maryland, employers continue to report difficulty finding workers, limiting their ability to expand operations and create new opportunities. Structured, well-supported job fairs offer a direct mechanism to close that gap by expediting hiring and fostering real-time connections between employers and qualified candidates.

Recent economic indicators underscore the urgency of this initiative. While Maryland's employment growth rose between 1.5% and 3% monthly in 2024, growth in 2025 has fallen below 1% per month. Additionally, Maryland ranked 45th nationally for domestic migration from July 2023 to July 2024, losing more than 18,000 residents. Creating immediate pathways to employment is essential to retaining our workforce and strengthening economic stability.

Maryland is home to outstanding academic institutions and nationally recognized workforce development programs. The state leads the nation in academic R&D spending and ranks 18th in industrial R&D. House Bill 1070 ensures that this talent is connected with meaningful employment opportunities.

Senate Bill 539 is a modest investment with significant potential returns for businesses, workers, and communities across our state. For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 539.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

William A. Christopher
President/CEO

"To advance Dorchester County through educating, promoting and growing a strong business community"