

**SB539.FAVORABLE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Angela Rose

Position: FAV



March 9, 2026

**RE: Favorable Support – Senate Bill 539  
Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities  
Grant Program and Fund**

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Harford County Chamber of Commerce and the more than 700 businesses/organizations we represent across the region, we respectfully submit this letter in **support of Senate Bill 539**. This legislation establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program to support the planning and execution of workforce events and job fairs that connect Maryland employers with job seekers.

Workforce availability remains one of the most significant challenges facing employers across Maryland and particularly in Harford County. Businesses of all sizes continue to report difficulty finding qualified workers, while many job seekers struggle to identify clear pathways into meaningful employment. SB 539 provides a practical and targeted approach to bridging this gap by supporting organizations that convene employers, training providers, and job seekers through workforce events and job fairs. These events create direct connections that often lead to immediate hiring opportunities and long-term career pathways.

The creation of the Workforce Opportunities Grant Fund will help ensure that nonprofit organizations, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, and other partners have the resources necessary to host impactful workforce engagement initiatives. By investing in these connections, Maryland strengthens its talent pipeline while supporting economic growth and business sustainability. The program’s structure—including competitive grants and reporting requirements—also ensures accountability and measurable outcomes.

For Harford County employers, workforce recruitment and retention remain critical priorities. Many local businesses—from manufacturing and logistics to healthcare, hospitality, and small retail—benefit directly from workforce fairs and industry-focused hiring events. Support for these initiatives allows communities to respond to local workforce needs while helping residents access quality employment opportunities close to home.

The Harford County Chamber strongly believes that workforce development and economic development are inseparable. Strategic investments that connect people to jobs support businesses, strengthen families, and contribute to Maryland’s overall economic competitiveness.

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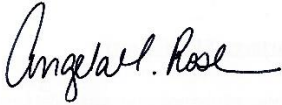
**President/CEO**

Angela Rose

For these reasons, the Harford County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the committee to issue a **favorable report on Senate Bill 539.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to strengthening Maryland's workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela M. Rose". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light gray rectangular background.

Angela M. Rose  
**President & CEO**  
**Harford County Chamber of Commerce**



# Testimony Letter for SB 539-HB 1070.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Christopher

Position: FAV



## DORCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

306 High Street, Cambridge, MD 21613

410-228-3575

[info@dorchesterchamber.org](mailto:info@dorchesterchamber.org)

[www.dorchesterchamber.org](http://www.dorchesterchamber.org)

**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"

**SB539\_WorkforceGrant\_KennedyKrieger\_Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV



DATE: March 11, 2026      COMMITTEE: Senate Finance  
BILL NO: Senate Bill 539  
BILL TITLE: Dept of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund  
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger supports Senate Bill 539 - Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund,

**Bill Summary:**

Establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program to provide grants to support the planning and execution of workforce events and job fairs in the State.

**Background:**

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger’s services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Kennedy Krieger's Neurodiversity at Work is a catalyst for collaboration, innovative ideas, and actionable strategies that drive workplace success. Together, we’re shaping more inclusive, forward-thinking workplaces - where untapped potential becomes a powerful driver of success. Currently, the program includes several specialty initiatives: CORE Foundations (a Developmental Disabilities Administration Licensed Agency), HR pathways hiring program, training and education services, legislative efforts, research, transition consultation services, and planning for an annual national conference along with ongoing events.

Kennedy Krieger Institute believes that individuals with disabilities have the skills, talents, and drive to contribute significantly to the workforce and to the broader community. A neurodiverse workforce benefits all.

**Rationale:**

Establishing a Workforce Opportunities Grant Program to financially support workforce events and job fairs can have meaningful impact for individuals with disabilities seeking employment. This initiative supports organizations that can successfully connect employers with potential employees, ultimately improving statewide workforce participation and long-term economic resilience.

For individuals with disabilities, job fairs provide an opportunity to network and explore potential jobs that may interest them. Additionally, they can receive information about workforce accommodations, access inclusive employers, and participate in on-the-spot interviews that can increase confidence and independence.

**Kennedy Krieger requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 539.**

**SB0539 - MBA - FAV - GR26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Evan Richards

Position: FAV



**SB 539 – Department of Social and Economic Mobility –  
Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund  
Committee: Senate Finance Committee  
Date: March 11, 2026  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Bankers Association (MBA) **SUPPORTS** SB 539. This legislation establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility to provide grants to support workforce events and job fairs in Maryland. SB 539 represents a forward-looking investment in Maryland’s workforce, job creators, and economic ecosystem.

SB 539 advances the economic mobility that underpins a healthy, resilient financial system. Workforce events and job fairs not only help residents secure stable and higher-paying jobs, but they also strengthen household financial stability, support responsible borrowing, reduce default risk, and enhance long-term community economic health—all conditions that allow financial institutions to serve customers more effectively. When more Marylanders are working and earning, the entire state benefits.

In addition, financial institutions of all sizes rely on a steady pipeline of qualified talent—from entry-level customer service staff to technology, risk management, and finance professionals. The events supported under SB 539 provide banks with valuable opportunities to engage directly with job seekers, recruit new employees, and build long-term relationships with the communities they serve. By participating in these job fairs, banks can help connect Maryland residents with career-track positions that offer competitive wages, advancement opportunities, and comprehensive benefits.

By helping job seekers connect with employers, this bill directly invests in building a stronger workforce in Maryland. Accordingly, MBA urges the issuance of a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 539.

*The Maryland Bankers Association (MBA) represents FDIC-insured community, regional, and national banks, employing thousands of Marylanders and holding \$194.8 billion in deposits in over 1,100 branches across our State. The Maryland banking industry serves customers across the State and provides an array of financial services including residential mortgage lending, business banking, estates and trust services, consumer banking, and more.*

**MDCC\_SB 539\_Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Grason Wiggins

Position: FAV



## Senate Bill 539

**Position: Favorable**

Committee: Senate Finance

Date: March 11, 2026

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Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (“Maryland Chamber”) is a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and opportunity for all Marylanders.

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. Senate Bill 539 ensures that this talent is connected with meaningful employment opportunities.

The success of the November 1, 2024, job fair hosted at United Therapeutics in Silver Spring demonstrates the effectiveness of this model. That event attracted hundreds of job seekers, brought together more than 25 employers and service providers, and resulted in same-day hiring. By replicating that success across districts statewide, Maryland can generate direct and immediate economic opportunity for thousands of constituents.

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



**SB539\_WorkforceGrants\_Support\_3.9.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Juli McCoy

Position: FAV

March 9, 2026

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

**SB539 – Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund**

Dear Chairwoman Beidle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce and the rural business community we serve, I write in strong support of Senate Bill 539, the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund.

This bill makes a targeted and strategic investment in facilitating employment across the state. Workforce challenges continues to be an issue for our local employers, and this legislation would provide a practical and immediate solution by directly connecting jobseekers with businesses at no cost to employers.

For more than 20 years, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce held a business expo to showcase members, but the cost became prohibitive, particularly for our mid-sized businesses. In 2026, we made the decision to end the event and instead partner with the Western Maryland Consortium, American Job Center, and Maryland Department of Labor Veteran Affairs to connect hiring employers with local jobseekers. Because of this partnership, our employers can participate at no cost and the location of the event is centrally located for ease of access. Last year, the same event attracted over 700 jobseekers.

Our role this year is to print a booklet that will land in the hands of 2,000 jobseekers that will feature advertising, tips and tricks, advice, and resources from the community such as how work-appropriate attire, hygiene items, and more.

This type of event is crucial, but a no-cost facility is not always available. One challenge with the free location is amount of time for the event, which is limited to just two hours. If even half of the 700 attend, this still leaves many who may miss an opportunity. Access to grant dollars to help with coordination, logistics, venue costs, and other supports would help us connect our employers with the right candidates with far less restrictions.

For these reasons, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 539.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Juli McCoy  
President & CEO  
Allegany County Chamber of Commerce

**SB539testimony2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: william Chambers

Position: FAV



## Senate Bill 539

### Position: Favorable

Committee: Senate Finance

Date: March 9, 2026

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Founded in 1920, the Salisbury Area Chamber of Chamber of Commerce represent businesses and organizations from 13 Maryland counties.

Senate Bill 539 makes a targeted and strategic investment to 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 and especially the entire eastern shore, 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 fell 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 relates to meaningful employment opportunities.

The success of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce November 1, 2024 job fair hosted at United Therapeutics in Silver Spring demonstrates the effectiveness of this model. That event attracted hundreds of job seekers, brought together more than 25 employers and service providers, and resulted in same-day hiring. By replicating that success across districts statewide, Maryland can generate direct and immediate economic opportunity for thousands of constituents.

Senate Bill 539 is a modest investment with significant potential returns for businesses, workers, and communities across our state. **For these reasons, the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 539.**

Respectfully,

William R. Chambers President/CEO

**SALISBURY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*The Voice for Business on Delmarva*

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**SB 539.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brandon Butler

Position: FWA

## **MWA Members**

### **Anne Arundel County**

Anne Arundel Workforce  
Development Corporation  
*Kirkland Murray, Executive Director*

### **Baltimore City**

Mayor's Office of Employment  
Development  
*MacKenzie Garvin, Director*

### **Baltimore County**

Baltimore County Department of  
Economic and Workforce  
Development  
*Jonathan Sachs, Director*

### **Carroll County**

Carroll County Workforce  
Development  
*Heather Lee Powell, Manager*

### **Frederick County**

Frederick County Workforce  
Services  
*Michelle Day, Director*

### **Howard County**

Howard County Office of Workforce  
Development  
*Stephanie Adibe, Director*

### **Lower Shore**

Lower Shore Workforce Alliance  
(Somerset, Wicomico, & Worcester,  
Counties)  
*Leslie Porter-Cabell, Workforce  
Director*

### **Montgomery County**

WorkSource Montgomery, Inc.  
*Anthony Featherstone, Executive  
Director*

### **Prince George's County**

Prince George's County Workforce  
Development Board  
*Jeffrey Swilley, Interim Executive  
Director*

### **Southern Maryland**

Southern Maryland Job Source  
(Calvert, Charles, & St. Mary's  
Counties)  
*Ruthy Davis, Director*

### **Susquehanna Region**

Susquehanna Workforce Network,  
Inc. (Cecil & Harford Counties)  
*Kimberly Justus, Executive Director*

### **Upper Shore**

Upper Shore Workforce Investment  
Board (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent,  
Queen Anne's, & Talbot Counties)  
*Ellen LaFrankie, Executive Director*

### **Western Maryland**

Western Maryland Consortium  
(Allegany, Garrett &  
Washington Counties)  
*Stacey Ferrare, Executive Director*

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

Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Workforce Association (MWA), which represents Maryland's 13 Local Workforce Development Boards, I respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill 539, with amendment.

SB 539 advances important workforce engagement efforts by supporting events and initiatives that connect Marylanders to employment and career pathways. Strengthening workforce access and coordination is a shared priority across the State's workforce system.

As introduced, the bill appropriately allows nonprofit organizations, workforce entities, and partnerships to apply for funding. However, to ensure alignment with Maryland's federally designated workforce system and to maximize coordination across local workforce areas,

MWA recommends the addition of the following amendment to § 9-4127(b) as paragraph (5):

(5) AN APPLICANT THAT IS NOT A LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MAY RECEIVE A GRANT UNDER THIS SECTION ONLY IF THE APPLICANT HAS ENTERED INTO A FORMAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE MARYLAND WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION.

This amendment does not restrict eligibility. Rather, it ensures that grant-funded activities are aligned with Maryland's statewide workforce strategy and coordinated with the local workforce boards that are federally recognized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Local workforce boards serve as the boots-on-the-ground infrastructure for workforce development across Maryland. When state funding supports workforce initiatives, coordination with this existing system strengthens impact, reduces duplication, and promotes accountability.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB 539 with the proposed amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kirkland Murray, President  
Maryland Workforce Association

**SB0539\_FWA\_REFORM.docx (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FWA



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 539**

Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund

TO: Hon. Pamela Beidle, Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: REFORM Alliance

DATE: March 11th, 2026

REFORM Alliance is a national organization dedicated to transforming probation and parole systems across the United States by advancing evidence-based supervision policies that reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and protect public safety.

As part of REFORM's commitment to improving supervision systems, we recognize the critical role that meaningful employment plays in reducing recidivism and promoting long-term prosperity. Research consistently shows that stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of successful reentry. When individuals returning from the justice system have access to legitimate career pathways, they are far more likely to remain crime-free, support their families, and contribute positively to their communities.

Understanding this clear connection, REFORM stands in firm support of Senate Bill 539. We thank the sponsor for amending the bill to provide explicit support for Marylanders returning from incarceration. We know that this population is among the highest needs for additional workforce supports. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of people under probation earn less than \$20,000 per year, and research consistently shows that stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of reduced recidivism.

Maryland has made significant strides to ensure that its workforce system does not needlessly exclude individuals with criminal records. Senate Bill 539 builds on this progress by creating a fund to support job fairs and workforce grants to Local Workforce Boards and nonprofits that can help returning citizens find meaningful employment. By providing this funding, the bill dedicates meaningful additional resources to helping returning citizens reenter the workforce. Expanding access to employment opportunities for qualified Marylanders would provide immediate benefit to families and communities while also strengthening the reentry landscape for justice-impacted individuals, and specifically those on supervision.

Employment is not just about income; it is about stability, dignity, and accountability. By supporting this bill, Maryland can continue leading the way in smart, evidence-driven workforce

and public safety policy. REFORM Alliance respectfully urges a favorable report with the House Sponsor Amendments on Senate Bill 539.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SB 539\_MTBMA\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michael Sakata

Position: FWA



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

March 11, 2026

**RE: SB 539 – FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS – Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund**

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association (“MTBMA”) has been and continues to serve as the voice for Maryland’s construction transportation industry since 1932. Our association is comprised of 250 members. MTBMA encourages, develops, and protects the prestige of the transportation construction and materials industry in Maryland by establishing and maintaining respected relationships with federal, state, and local public officials. We proactively work with regulatory agencies and governing bodies to represent the interests of the transportation industry and advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland’s multimodal transportation system.

Senate Bill 539 establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility to provide competitive grants to nonprofit organizations, local workforce boards, and partnerships that include employers and community stakeholders. The Program is designed to support the planning and execution of job fairs and workforce events across the State.

MTBMA appreciates legislation like SB 539, but respectfully asks that the Program prioritize events that address high-demand industries, including transportation infrastructure, construction trades, engineering, logistics, and public works, to ensure that Maryland’s workforce development efforts align with the State’s economic and infrastructure needs. By targeting these industries, the Program can maximize impact and support the pipeline of skilled workers critical to Maryland’s ongoing growth and competitiveness.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Sakata", written in a cursive style.

Michael Sakata  
President and CEO  
Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association

# **Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Senat**

Uploaded by: Ardy Kamali

Position: INFO



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*Governor Wes Moore*

*Lt. Governor Aruna Miller*

*Secretary Walter L. Simmons*

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**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 539  
**Title:** Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund  
**Committee:** Finance  
**Hearing Date:** March 11, 2026  
**Position:** Letter of Information

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Social and Economic Mobility (DoSEM) submits this Letter of Information regarding Senate Bill 539. This bill would establish a Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and a corresponding special, nonlapsing Workforce Opportunities Grant Fund within DoSEM to support the planning and execution of workforce events and job fairs that connect job seekers with employers.

SB 539 is designed to strengthen a practical “front door” to employment by investing in workforce events and job fairs that directly connect Marylanders to hiring employers across multiple industries and regions. In practice, these events can:

- Expand access to work by bringing hiring employers and job seekers into the same place, particularly in regions or communities where transportation barriers, limited networks, or limited exposure to employers can reduce access to opportunities;
- Improve wages by connecting job seekers to employers with immediate hiring needs across sectors, and by supporting events that are structured to move participants from interest to interview to hire;
- Build pathways to wealth by accelerating entry into stable employment and creating repeatable, regionally accessible hiring touchpoints that can connect Marylanders to advancement opportunities and employer-connected career pathways over time.

Subject to available funding, DoSEM would establish a competitive grant application process for nonprofits, local workforce development boards, and partnerships (including employers and community organizations) that can run events across regions, engage multiple industries, and demonstrate capacity to connect job seekers directly with employers. Grant funds could be used for outreach, logistics, venues, support services, staffing, and event coordination.

The bill also requires an annual report beginning in 2028 with metrics including event locations, counts of participating employers and job seekers, and job placement/hires resulting from funded events. DoSEM can implement SB 539 using existing resources.

DoSEM appreciates the committee’s consideration of Senate Bill 539 and is available to answer questions and provide technical information.