



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

DATE: March 3, 2026

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Worcester County Office of Tourism and Economic Development

RE: House Bill 983 State Tax Credits, Modifications, and Exemptions - Alterations and Repeal

On behalf of the Worcester County Office of Tourism and Economic Development, I respectfully oppose HB 983- *State Tax Credits, Modifications, and Exemptions - Alterations and Repeal*.

For a rural county of just over 54,000 residents, economic development tools are not optional, they are essential. HB 983 strips counties of proven, flexible incentives at a time when fiscal uncertainty, inflation, and workforce pressures already challenge our ability to remain competitive.

Programs such as the One Maryland Tax Credit and the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit are especially important in rural jurisdictions like Worcester County. These tools help level the playing field by encouraging private-sector investment in economically distressed and underserved areas. Unlike large metropolitan counties that can leverage population density and market scale, rural counties rely on these incentives to compete for projects that would otherwise bypass us entirely.

In Worcester County, a modest capital investment or the creation of 20–30 jobs can have a transformational impact. These programs allow us to partner directly with businesses, workforce boards, community colleges, and local stakeholders to create sustainable growth. Removing or phasing out these incentives without meaningful replacements weakens our ability to attract employers, diversify our economy beyond seasonal tourism, and create year-round career opportunities for our residents.

Additionally, HB 983 imposes new annual reporting mandates on locally granted property tax credits. While accountability is important, adding administrative requirements without preserving the State partnership that once supported these incentives places further strain on small local governments with limited staffing capacity.

Maryland's economic future, particularly in rural regions, requires targeted, results-driven strategies. A broad elimination of these programs disproportionately harms counties like



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Worcester, which already faces structural disadvantages in statewide competitive incentive programs. For these reasons, Worcester County respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 983.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to Maryland's rural communities. I appreciate 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