

February 25, 2026

**TO:** Members of the Ways and Means Committee  
**FROM:** Mac Campbell, CVE, Executive Director, Baltimore Convention Center  
**RE:** House Bill 1232 – Baltimore City – Downtown Payment in Lieu of Taxes District  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The Baltimore Convention Center supports House Bill 1232, authorizing a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement for qualifying economic development projects within the Downtown RISE District. This legislation provides a meaningful incentive to stimulate redevelopment and attract new private investment to the heart of our city.

Downtown vibrancy and convention center success are inseparable. When surrounding properties sit vacant and businesses close — including hotels and restaurants — the effects are felt immediately in our industry. Over the past decade, downtown has experienced a decline of more than \$647.6 million in property value, \$11.8 million in annual property tax revenue, and nearly two million square feet of vacant or at-risk office space. That last figure is especially consequential for meetings and conventions. Office workers and nearby businesses generate the foot traffic that sustains restaurants, retail, and attractions, while also creating the energy and vitality that planners look for when evaluating a host city. During that same period, downtown has lost critical hotel properties — more than 10 percent of its total key inventory — and hotel renovations have slowed significantly.

These assets are not optional; they are often determining factors in whether planners choose Baltimore. We sell “tomorrow” every day — responding to RFPs and hosting site visits for events scheduled as far out as 2041. Too often, what visitors see raises questions about the trajectory of our downtown rather than confidence in its future.

A strong convention center depends on a strong downtown. In the past year alone, the Baltimore Convention Center supported more than 1,700 jobs and generated over \$14 million in state tax revenue and more than \$5 million in city tax revenue, not including the millions more spent directly by visitors on hotels, dining, transportation, and entertainment throughout Baltimore.

At the same time, competition has intensified. Meeting planners are gravitating toward cities that have paired capital investment with effective financial incentive programs. Cities such as Pittsburgh and Nashville have leveraged these tools to accelerate surrounding development and infrastructure growth, making them increasingly competitive for large-scale events.

Without proactive steps to address downtown’s real estate challenges and catalyze new investment, we risk losing future business. House Bill 1232 offers a strategic mechanism to drive redevelopment, strengthen the downtown environment, and protect and grow Maryland’s tourism economy.

Sincerely,



Mac Campbell, CVE  
Executive Director

