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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony

SB 493 – Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021

Favorable with Amendment

While our State is still being buffeted by both an economic and public health coronavirus storm, we are seeing the State trending in positive directions:

- While nowhere near “done” COVID-19 cases and deaths are both heading down. Vaccinations are beginning to get into Marylanders’ arms, though not nearly as quickly and efficiently as they need to (see the latest *60 Minutes* reporting).
- The State budget, after true doom and gloom projections a mere eleven months ago, finished FY21 with a surplus. Assuming the Biden COVID-19 Relief package makes it through the U.S. Senate, Maryland could see up to \$6 billion in federal aid.

The limited state fiscal damage has actually created opportunity, allowing the proposal, passage and future enactment of the RELIEF Act which will help thousands of Marylander individuals and businesses ride out the viral storm and be able to repair and resume.

But there are a number of things left behind, and on behalf of 30,000 state and higher education employees we’d like to point out just a few:

- Frontline state and higher education employees have continued reporting to work throughout the pandemic, ensuring the state continues to provide the services and supports that Marylanders need, particularly those in crisis. State and higher education employees have paid a harsh price, with thousands contracting COVID-19 and some sadly dying. Yet the Administration turned its back on most State employees when it came to monetarily rewarding such commitment, offering miniscule raises contingent upon the Board of Revenue Estimates underestimating revenues by tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. Maryland’s state and higher education workforce deserve not only verbal recognition, but financial recognition as well for their dedication and performance under crisis. State employee numbers per capita, as well as average State salary, are amongst the lowest in the country, and do little to assist in addressing chronic understaffing.
- The pandemic has wrought changes both positive and negative to not only how the State delivers services and supports, but also *what* those services and supports are.

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- The reduction in the State's prison population is a positive step forward for criminal justice reform. But with the reduction comes an increased need for services in pre-release as well as parole and probation. There has not been an increase to meet the increased needs, and the proposed closings of two pre-release centers is a penny-wise pound-foolish strategy.
- The increase in telework has created more flexible work opportunities, but without commensurate increases in childcare and adjustments to grants for four-year-old full-day education programs those work opportunities potentially end up hindering both job productivity and child development.

We understand this has been a challenging year for all involved, and we thank the General Assembly for its ongoing commitment in striving to get the State's population the supports and services it needs. The steps outlined above are just some examples of the work that remains. We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.