



UPMC Western Maryland

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March 1, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB1144 – Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment

Dear Chair Kaiser:

On behalf of the nearly 2,200 employees at UPMC Western Maryland, we applaud Delegate Buckel for sponsoring legislation aimed at improving the economic conditions in Western Maryland.

At one time UPMC Western Maryland, formerly Western Maryland Health System, was one of several major employers in our region. During my career, I have witnessed the loss of thousands of good-paying jobs due to the closures of Kelly-Springfield Tire Company, PPG Industries, Biederlack, Bayliner and, most recently in 2019, the closure of the Verso paper mill. The loss of these jobs has not only negatively impacted families financially, this job loss has also affected their health and well-being as a result of losing their health benefits. While health insurance is not a pre-requisite to receiving medical attention, many individuals without insurance opt not to seek medical treatment, which often results in a diminished quality of life for those individuals.

In addition to providing opportunities for much-needed jobs and increased wages, this legislation will provide funding for other economic development projects for our region. As a rural hospital, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain physicians and other health care professionals because of our location. The improved economic conditions (e.g., infrastructure enhancements, new businesses, neighborhood revitalization, etc.) resulting from this legislation will be a tremendous asset in our recruitment efforts.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you and the House Ways and Means Committee give a **favorable report** to HB1144. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michele R. Martz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Michele R. Martz
President

cc: Ways and Means Committee Members

Senator George Edwards
Delegate Wendell Beitzel
Delegate Jason Buckel
Delegate Mike McKay
Nicole Fedeli, UPMC