

March 30, 2021

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

Re: SB0803 – Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund - Establishment

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser:

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests the House Ways and Means Committee give a **Favorable Report** to Senate Bill 0803 – Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund – Establishment.

It was my honor to present testimony to the committee in February on the cross-filed House Bill 1144. Since then, amendments have been filed on SB0803 that significantly reduce the original request from \$20,000,000 to *at least \$7,500,000*. The amended appropriation would still offer important growth to take place in Western Maryland, specifically in Allegany County.

Our access to institutions of higher education and career training further makes a case for this investment. We have made great strides in skills training, re-training, and in using our tourism economy to create new and exciting careers. However, in a community challenged for decades in filling the large gaps made by the exodus of living-wage industrial manufacturing jobs, funding that is accessible in addition to other state programs would boost new development, create and retain jobs, increase wages, and ultimately create new state and local tax revenue. It is further noteworthy that these dollars bear specific use within a confined geographical reach with much less competition among much larger communities across the state, which often hinders access to our rural area.

Progressive and innovative recommendations, governed with strategic oversight have been carefully outlined within this proposal. It is vital that Western Maryland is given a greater opportunity for a positive future through this investment. Your support of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund will allow us to showcase the potential that exists in this unique, and important part of Maryland.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Juli R. McCoy
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
House Ways and Means Committee Members
Western Maryland Delegation