

March 9, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB539 – Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund

Dear Chairwoman Beidle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce and the rural business community we serve, I write in strong support of Senate Bill 539, the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund.

This bill makes a targeted and strategic investment in facilitating employment across the state. Workforce challenges continues to be an issue for our local employers, and this legislation would provide a practical and immediate solution by directly connecting jobseekers with businesses at no cost to employers.

For more than 20 years, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce held a business expo to showcase members, but the cost became prohibitive, particularly for our mid-sized businesses. In 2026, we made the decision to end the event and instead partner with the Western Maryland Consortium, American Job Center, and Maryland Department of Labor Veteran Affairs to connect hiring employers with local jobseekers. Because of this partnership, our employers can participate at no cost and the location of the event is centrally located for ease of access. Last year, the same event attracted over 700 jobseekers.

Our role this year is to print a booklet that will land in the hands of 2,000 jobseekers that will feature advertising, tips and tricks, advice, and resources from the community such as how work-appropriate attire, hygiene items, and more.

This type of event is crucial, but a no-cost facility is not always available. One challenge with the free location is amount of time for the event, which is limited to just two hours. If even half of the 700 attend, this still leaves many who may miss an opportunity. Access to grant dollars to help with coordination, logistics, venue costs, and other supports would help us connect our employers with the right candidates with far less restrictions.

For these reasons, the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 539.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Juli McCoy
President & CEO
Allegany County Chamber of Commerce