



RMC Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: February 10, 2020

Time: 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Type: Conference Call

Participants: Lindsay Thompson, Janice Palmer, Steve McHenry, Charlotte Davis, Bill Valentine, John Hartline, Don Mulrine, Kathy Shirk, Chris Benzing, Bill Christopher; Susanna Zilberfarb; Kimberly Kravotil, Susan O'Neil. Debbie Bowden, Josh Bolinger, Kelly Dudeck, Ryan Snow, Senator Addie Eckardt; Cassie Shirk; Greg Padghm; Wilbur Levengood; Alice Settle-Raskin; Amanda Clevenger; Megan D'Arcy.

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting convened at 2:02pm and the Rural Maryland Co-Chair, Lindsay Thompson welcomed everyone on the call and proceeded with the agenda.

Review of January 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Lindsay asked participants if there were any additions or corrections to the 1/27 minutes. Susan O'Neil and Kim Kratovil were not listed as participants. Their names will be added to these minutes. There were no additional comments. Minutes were approved.

Legislative Tracking

- *HB998/SB501 - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants - Administration and Funding. Committee Comments: Charlotte Davis provided background on the bill as the loan program is a recruitment tool to attract Physicians and Physician Assistants to rural and underserved areas of the state by offering loan repayment. **Committee supports the bill.***
- *SB502 - Health Insurance - Telehealth - Delivery of Mental Health Services - Coverage for Home Settings. Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that she understood that this bill includes telehealth and the delivery of medicinal and mental health services covered to patients in their home setting and that it would be covered under the Medicaid. Lindsay stated that from an Eastern Shore perspective, telehealth would be helpful. Charlotte would like to specify that a patient can utilize telehealth from their home and that it initially sounds great, but will the federal government pay for it and if not, then who. The Committee decided to support the bill in consent until we have more information. Charlotte will follow-up with Senator Hershey's office. **On Hold.***

- *HB999/SB540 - Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)* Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that this bill is specific to Choptank Electric Cooperative and the bill would essentially make the Cooperative, a member regulated cooperative that would use their current infrastructure to offer broadband. Senator Eckardt stated that the hearing is on 2/25 and that she would like to have more information and clarification; her most pressing concern is getting broadband to the most remote areas. Bill Christopher stated that the Cooperative could create a monopoly in broadband and suggested wording change to the bill and possibly an amendment to clarify intent. Charlotte informed the Committee that the Broadband Task Force could not take a position because there is a conflict between another municipal light company. Lindsay stated that we will get more information and be prepared to discuss on the next call. **On-Hold.**
- *HB901/SB527-Health Insurance - Policy of Group Health Insurance – Associations,* Committee Comments: Charlotte informed the committee that this bill clarifies in the current law that chambers of commerce may be considered an “association” and therefore eligible to offer insurance to small businesses. There was interest in such use from Garrett County’s chamber of commerce members. Charlotte stated that the farm bureau recently started such a program. She plans to check in with the Bureaus Executive Director, John Torres to see how they did it. Delegates Crosby and Cullison are very interested in this bill and are available to help where they can. Bill Christopher raised a point that this bill could cause a mass exodus of people from the state health exchange. The committee decided that more information was needed. **On-Hold.**
- *SB788 -Income Tax - Credit for Community-Based Faculty Clinicians,* Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that this bill will essentially add certain individuals who serve as community-based faculty clinicians for a certain clerkship approved by the Maryland Department of Health for medical and nursing students. This is beneficial as it recruits caregivers to rural areas. **Committee Supports the Bill.**
- *HB1508/SB790 - Information Technology - Communications Lines – Installation,* Committee Comments: Charlotte informed the group that this dealt mainly with broadband and applies to a resource sharing agreement. Additionally, certain fees are waived for all last mile broadband telecommunications projects in unserved areas. **Committee Supports the Bill.**
- *HB1488/SB985 - Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund – Establishment.* Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that the purpose of this bill is to encourage local foods. Last year a bill essentially mandated certain percentage of public institution used food that was sourced locally. This bill set up a fund to require the University system to require a local food certified enterprise. This would apply for to those farmers that have 8 or more animal units or make more than \$2500. Steve McHenry shared that this bill creates essentially a wholesale opportunity to sell foods in state institutions. MDA would need to staff a position in order to make it work. Cassie Shirk stated she had a fiscal note. Committee decided to wait to ensure no conflict. **On-Hold.**
- *SB979 – Tax Credit – Valued Added Processing Expenses.* Committee Comments: This bill allows a tax credit for certain capital expenses for use in value-added processing conducted in the

state. A comment was made that it will be a tough year for tax credits. **Committee Supports the Bill.**

- *HB1487/SB986 - Public Schools – Agricultural Education and Grant Programs* Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that this bill establishes the Maryland Agricultural Education Grant Program for 2020/2021 school year. Each county board would have to implement an agriculture program. The underlying hope is to add it to Kirwan. **Committee Supports the Bill.**
- *HB1394/SB982 - Highway User Revenues - Revenue and Distribution,* Committee Comments: Charlotte stated that this bill was to restore the highway user revenue. 15% split. **Committee Supports the Bill.**
- *SB495/HB1035 – Bay Restoration Fund – Use of Funds – Municipal Wastewater Facilities,* Committee Comments: Lindsay stated that this bill expands the authorized use of the Fund to include certain costs associated with the connection of a property using on-site sewage disposal system to an existing municipal wastewater facility. A participant commented that municipals need access to funds as one can't expect municipalities to pay for these upgrades and that loans are not as good grants. **Committee Supports the Bill.**

Other

Lindsay asked if there were any other bills to bring to the committee's attention. Several participants mentioned the Kirwan bill (SB1000/HB1300). The committee agreed to watch it.

Adjourn

Lindsay Thompson requested an adjournment of the meeting at 2:51pm and a motion was made, seconded. Adjournment was unanimous.

Next Meeting: Monday, February 24, 2020, 2pm-3pm, Conference Call