



RMC Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: February 8, 2021

Time: 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Type: Zoom Teleconference

Participants: Lindsay Thompson, Bill Valentine, Don Mulrine, Tyler Patton, Chris Benzing, Beth Hill, Scott Warner, Janice Palmer, Greg Padgham, Alice Settle-Raskin, Colin Dennis, Debbie Bowden, Lara Wilson, Cassie Shirk, Gabrielle Leach, Collin Dennis, Matt Tefteau, Kelly Dudeck, Joe Hinson, Steve McHenry, John Hartline, Kimberly Kratovil, Mike Thielke, Dan Rider, Charlotte Davis, Amanda Clevenger, Dakota Matthews, Megan D'Arcy.

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Lindsay Thompson welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2:02pm and introduced herself as Chair and Chris Benzing as Co-Chair. Ms. Thompson completed the roll call.

Review of January 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Lindsay Thompson asked everyone to review the minutes from 1/25/2021 and asked if anyone had any changes or omissions to the minutes. There were none and the minutes were accepted by consensus.

Bill Tracking

SB692/HB860 – State Planning – Preservation of Agricultural Land – Goal, Hearing 2/17. Ms. Lindsay Thompson informed the committee that the bill is sponsored by Delegate Jim Gilchrist in the House and cross filed by Senator Young in the Senate. Ms. Thompson stated that the purpose of the bill is to extend the timeline for the State's land preservation goals of 1,030,000 acres to 2030 since the current timeline is expiring. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any questions. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any questions or opposition. There were none. The Committee supported a letter of support for SB692/HB860.

SB567/HB731 - Telehealth Services – Expansion, House Hearing, 2/11 & Senate Hearing, 2/17. Ms. Lindsay Thompson stated that this bill is in request of the administration and asked Dakota Matthews to provide a synopsis. Mr. Mathews stated that the bill was similar to SB0003 but added audio only and expanded the eligible providers for telehealth. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any questions or concerns on the bill. Mr. Chris Benzing made the point that the committee has approved bills in support of telehealth and that this is a continuation of what the committee has been doing all session. Ms. Thompson asked if there was any opposition to submitting a letter of support for SB567/HB731. There was no opposition. The Committee approved a letter of support SB567/HB731.

SB568/HB732 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth – Out-of-State Health Practitioners, Senate Hearing, 2/16 & House Hearing, 2/10. Ms. Lindsay Thompson informed committee members that this bill will expand the availability of telehealth to out of state practitioners. Ms. Lara Wilson, MHRA stated that they will not be supporting the bill as it takes a one-way approach and they would prefer to see a compact, bi-directional approach that would lessen any competition concerns. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any additional concerns or questions. Mr. Chris Benzing suggested the committee support the bill as our concern is for people in a rural area to have access to health care and this bill provides this access. Ms. Thompson asked if there was any opposition. There was none. The Committee approved a letter of support for SB568/HB732.

SB571/HB736 – Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact, Senate Hearing, 2/16 & House Hearing, 2/18. Ms. Lindsay Thompson stated that the bill improves the availability of counselors and mental health services in Maryland. Ms. Lara Wilson stated that MHRA is supporting all the compacts because they are bi-directional. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any questions or opposition. There were none. The Committee approved the letter of support for SB571/HB736.

SB695/HB513 – Maryland Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Fund and Task Force to Study the Maryland Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Fund, Senate Hearing 2/17 & House Hearing-canceled as of date of 2/8 committee meeting. Ms. Lindsay Thompson stated that the bill establishes the Maryland Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Fund, which will increase the availability for transportation, specifically for dialysis treatment for patients and it requires certain kidney dialysis centers to pay a \$20 fee for certain transports. Mr. John Hartline and Mr. Greg Padgham stated that they would be in favor of this bill. Ms. Thompson asked if there was any opposition. There was none. The Committee approved the letter of support for SB695/HB513.

Additional Comments

- Ms. Thompson asked the Committee if there were any additional bills that needed to be discussed. Mr. Dan Rider stated that SB65 was successfully amended to only pertain to black liquor and retains mill residues. He further stated that this will be significant in an upcoming bill SB549/HB682, which focuses on using wood for alternative energy, specifically heating. Ms. Beth Hill asked for support of SB549/HB682 as well. Ms. Hill stated that this bill will be very important to the rural economy and that there are amendments that she sent out to certain members of the Committee. Ms. Thompson asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding this bill. There were none. Mr. Steve McHenry made the motion to support the bill with the amendments suggested by the forest industry. John Hartline seconded. Ms. Thompson asked if there was any opposition. There was none. The Committee approved a letter of support with amendment for SB549/HB682.
- Ms. Beth Hill asked for the Committee's standing on HB581/SB486 - Labor and Employment - Employment Standards during and Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act) as the Maryland Forest Association has received many concerns regarding this bill. Ms. Lindsay Thompson provided information on the bill and stated that the Rural Maryland Council did not take a position on it. Ms. Thompson recommended that anybody who has specific concerns to share them with their legislators and representatives from their district.
- Mr. Matt Tefteau asked if anyone had the bill text for HB1328 – Economic Development – Broadband Providers – Joint Trenching and Fee. Ms. Davis stated that this is the dig once policy from MACO and Senator Hester has the bill text in the Senate but she has not seen it.
- Ms. Thompson stated that there are many bills being introduced and that the Committee should be on standby for unscheduled meetings if necessary or noncontroversial items may be shared by email for input on opposition only. Mr. Chris Benzing suggested the Committee setup a meeting on the upcoming President's Day holiday on February 15th. Ms. Thompson agreed to place a hold on this date.
- Ms. Cassie Shirk shared that the MDA's Operating Budget hearing will be on Thursday, 2/11 scheduled for 1:30pm and was moved to 12:30pm.

Rural Maryland Day

Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that Rural Maryland Day is scheduled for February 11th from 8:30 to 12:30pm, Rural Caucus at 9:00am and the Governor's proclamation at noon. Ms. Davis then reviewed contents of related materials that included the Agenda, Talking Points, and Legislator Appointment Scheduler.

Adjourn

Mr. Chris Benzing asked if there were any other items for the good of the order. Mr. Tyler Patton moved to adjourn. Mr. John Hartline seconded. Mr. Benzing thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and adjourned the meeting 2:48pm.

Next Meeting: Tentative Monday, February 15, 2021, 2pm-3pm, Zoom Teleconference