



RMC Legislative Committee Meeting
February 14, 2022
2:00 pm to 3:00 pm
Zoom Teleconference
Agenda

Participants: Chris Benzing, Susan O'Neill, Scott Warner, Darren Jarboe, Matt Teffeau, Grayson Middleton, Bill Christopher, Monique Snyder, Greg Padgham, Don Mulrine, Charlotte Davis, Beth Hill, Amanda Clevenger, Janice Palmer, Alice Settle-Raskin, John Hartline, Lucille Walker, Diana Hsu, Brandon Rosario, Steve McHenry, Dakota Matthews, Megan D'Arcy

- I. Welcome and Introductions: Co-Chair Chris Benzing welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2:04pm. Ms. Charlotte Davis provided an update on session logistics which include the House continuing to meet virtual and the Senate will be in person but guests are only allowed in the committee room during the actual bill hearing. Additionally, the House is still accepting sign ups 48 hours in advance and the Senate is day before after 4pm to 10am the following day.
- II. Review of February 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes: Co-chair Chris Benzing asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Don Mulrine made the motion to approve the 2/7/2022 minutes. Mr. John Hartline seconded it. There were no objections. The minutes for 2/7/2022 were unanimously approved.
- III. 2022 Bill Tracking: The agenda for February 14, 2022 contained 48 bills to review and due to time constraints, the Committee only reviewed those bills that had a hearing coming up. The minutes reflect the decision only on the bills discussed and voted on with an additional two bills under 'Other'. *Note Dan Rider and Darren Jarboe request to abstain from all voting.* *Denote bills previously supported.

On Hold From 2/7/2022 meeting:

- SB640: Primary and Secondary Education - Maintenance of Effort Requirements – Alterations, Senate - First Reading - Budget and Taxation. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that she is waiting to hear back from MACo. *Status – Hold.*
- HB570: Pesticides – Mosquito Control Products and PFAS Chemicals, House - First Reading - Health and Government Operations. The Committee is waiting to hear from MACo. *Status – Hold*
- HB695/SB522: Environment – Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022), House - Environment – Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022). Ms. Charlotte Davis reported that she did not hear from MACo on this bill and Committee decided to monitor the bill. *Status – Monitor*
- HB709/SB632: Maryland Health Benefit Exchange - Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that she is waiting to hear back from Senator Hester's office and asked that the bill be placed on hold. *Status – Hold*

- HB727/SB541: Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act): Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that MACo is supporting the bill with amendment and that overall, it's a good bill for MALPF, Rural Legacy, and MARBIDCO but it does contain challenges related to the local side. The Committee discussed the bill and plan to support it with amendment with the request to include the payback schedule; the source of the funds; and, to make local side whole in the process. Mr. Steve McHenry recapped the conversation stating that the agriculture is held harmless in all three buckets and that the locals' governments receive what they are supposed to get it. *Status – Support with Amendment.*
- HB787: Retiree Income Tax Relief Act of 2022. The Committee asked to defer it until the next meeting because there are a couple of iterations, and they would like to have a better understanding of the bill. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the Committee should support it for consistency, but they bill can be placed on hold since the hearing isn't until February 23rd. *Status – Hold*
- HB806: Building Standards and Emissions Reductions – High Performance, State, and Local Government Buildings, State Operations, and Eligible Projects: Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that this bill relates to the building standards and green house gasses and contains wood. Mr. Dan Rider did not have the opportunity to read it and the hearing is March 1st so the Committee decided to place the bill on hold. *Status – Hold*
- HB831: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Commercial and Residential Buildings: The Committee decided to place this bill on hold until they make a decision on HB806. *Status - Hold*

New bills (*previously supported):

- HB884 (correction from HB844 to 884): State Conservation Land – Old Growth Forests – Protection, House Hearing – 2/25. Ms. Beth Hill stated that MFA will be opposing the bill as they feel there is enough preserved on state lands, roughly 50% of the state forests fall under the general management category of state lands and the remaining are off the table due to buffers and critical area and feel the bill is not necessary. The Committee decided to monitor the bill. *Status – Monitor*
- HB876: Maryland Forestry Education Fund – Establishment, House Hearing. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that this is a mandate in the amount of \$750,000 to help support the forestry boards across the state. Mr. Dan Rider did not review the bill yet. The Committee decided to place the bill on hold since the hearing is on March 4, 2022. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated this was important because RMC funds this work and this funding would supplant the Councils funding. *Status – On Hold.*
- HB929: Department of Housing and Community Development – Opportunity Zone Fund – Establishment, House Hearing – First Reading: Ms. Charlotte Davis worked with Senator Hester to introduce a Rural Opportunity Zone bill several years ago and DHCD said they couldn't do it so Ms. Davis would like to support the bill with an amendment to include our rural opportunity zone fund. Mr. Don Mulrine made the motion, Mr. John Hartline seconded it. Co-chair Chris Benzing asked if there was any opposition. There was none. *Status – Support with Amendment.*
- HB1140/SB695: Natural Resources – Voluntary Firewood Treatment Certification - Program – Establishment - First Reader – 3/01: Ms. Beth Hill asked the Committee to support the bill and it was a bill that MFA worked with MDA but ultimately it is a wood product, so it was a better fit for DNR. Ms. Beth stated that's voluntary and sets

the groundwork to get a firewood business in western Maryland. Co-chair Chris Benzing asked for a motion to support the bill. Mr. John Hartline made a motion to support the bill. Mr. Don Mulrine seconded it. There was no opposition. *Status – Support.*

- *SB726/HB1187: Transportation – Highway User Revenues – Revenue and Distribution 3/10 – First Reading. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated this bill is full restoration of the 30% gas tax sharing. Mr. Don Mulrine made the motion. Mr. John Hartline seconded it. There was no opposition. *Status -Support.*
- SB830/HB1228: Natural Resources – Oysters – Spat, Shells, and Substrate – First Reader: Recycle oyster shell. Mr. Steve McHenry stated that this bill involves a lot of DNR activity and there is \$1 million dollar loan/grant fund to fund seafood businesses that agree to recycle their oyster shells. Co-chair Chris Benzing asked for a motion to support. Mr. John Hartline, Don Mulrine second. There was no objection. *Status – Support.*
- HB1242/SB826: Economic Development – Maryland’s Microloan Program – Establishment – First Reading – 3/01. Mr. Steve McHenry stated that the Waterman’s Fund bill is being driven by a seafood dealer in Baltimore County to get support for generational waterman – a waterman that owns majority percent of their annual income from commercial fishing. Mr. McHenry stated that a beginner waterman would be eligible as well. Co-chair Chris Benzing asked for a motion to support. Mr. John Hartline, Don Mulrine second. There was no objection. *Status – Support.*
- HB1243: Public Health – Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Program – First Reading. The Committee decided they needed more time to review the bill. *Status – Hold*
- SB696/HB975: Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment for Nurses and Nursing Workers – Program Establishment and Funding, Senate – Hearing 2/22; House – First Reading: Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the Committee typically supports the LARP programs to support more medical workers in rural areas. Co-chair Hartline asked for a motion to support the bill. Mr. Don Mulrine made the motion, Mr. John Hartline seconded. There was no opposition. *Status – Support*
- SB846/HB1094: Economic Development – Maryland Technology Infrastructure Pilot Program – Establishment – 3/01: Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that this is a regional bill but important because it is increasing authority for the Regional Council in western Maryland and that the bill is to be monitored. *Status – Monitor.*

IV. Other

- SB630/HB706: Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Resilience, Hearing 2/24. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that this was on our list to monitor, and it is creating an office of resilience in the Department of Emergency Management, and they would coordinate with local agencies to implement resilience strategies and efforts. Mr. Don Mulrine made a motion to support the bill. Ms. Alice Settle-Raskin seconded it. There was no opposition. *Status – Support*
- SB528: Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. The Committee discussed that this bill is a disadvantage for cheap reliable fuel for rural, poorer parts of the state. Mr. Don Mulrine made the motion to oppose the bill. Mr. John Hartline seconded it. There was not opposition to oppose the bill. *Status - Oppose*

- a. Virtual Rural Maryland Day Recap: Ms. Charlotte Davis provided an overview of the successful event.
 - b. Maryland Day Grab & Go Lunch - March 25, 2022: Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that she will be sending sponsor letters shortly.
- V. Adjourn: Mr. Chris Benzing adjourned the meeting at 3:07pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, February 21, 2022, 2pm-3pm, Zoom Teleconference