



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 23, 2021

Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 722: Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation - Established

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

I commend Senator Hester for introducing Senate Bill 722, which would create a Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation. This bill would transfer the responsibilities of the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs (GOSBA), among others, into the new Department which would report directly to the Governor.

I am also encouraged that SB 722 would expand existing GOSBA reporting requirements. Under the proposed bill, the new department would report on the status of small businesses in Maryland and their access to opportunities to increase their capital. The department would also be responsible for evaluating participation levels in the State Minority Business Enterprise Program and the Small Business Reserve Program.

My Administration takes pride in the diversity of our residents and businesses. Ensuring that our entrepreneurial and innovative private sector reflects the diversity of our county has been a long-standing priority. As former Chair of the Howard County Council, I led the initiative for the Howard County Equal Business Opportunity Commission to study the effectiveness of the county's Equal Business Opportunity Program. This program aims to include businesses led by people of color, women and those in our developmental disability community into the county's procurement process for all goods and services.

In 2019, my Administration spent \$59.2 million with minority, woman, and veteran owned firms, which represented a nearly 20% increase than what was spent in 2018. We have worked to update our public procurement processes, making Howard County Government more innovative, effective and inclusive.

Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our private sector only makes it stronger. When government can work with business to provide opportunities for all, our State becomes more competitive and able to seize future business opportunities. Senate Bill 722 creates a state-level partner to help local jurisdictions build on existing efforts to champion diversity and a strong private sector.

For these and many more reasons, I urge your support of SB 722.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball

Howard County Executive