



# MCCC Advocacy



Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly  
Priorities Hearing  
November 20, 2019

Good Evening Chairs Korman and Zucker, Vice Chairs Carr and Lee, and members of the Delegation. My name is Tricia Swanson and I am the Vice President of Government Relations at the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

I am here tonight to testify on behalf of the Chambers nearly 500 members, but if I could, I'd like to editorialize for a minute. I have officially been at the Chamber for a year and half. Above anything else, the most exciting part about this job has been learning how incredibly diverse and phenomenal our business community is in this County.

The diversity I've witnessed in our membership is both in size and in industry. 80% of our members are small businesses. Their industries range from healthcare, to hospitality, to federal contracting, to educational institutions, to construction, to technology, to financial institutions, and many things in between. All of you should be proud to represent a county of businesses doing revolutionary and innovative things.

As an example, USG is an active member of the Chamber and you heard Dr. Edelstein speak about the incredible work he is leading on that campus. USG is directly answering the dire need for top talent – particular as it relates to industries that will drive Montgomery County's economy and will ensure that the county is competitive regionally and nationally for economic growth.

Speaking of talent, back in July, the Chamber held its annual retreat with our Board of Directors and we asked them one question: What is keeping you up at night? We had one resounding answer – regardless of the size of the business or the industry. One resounding answer: Talent. Access to talent, attraction of talent, and retention of talent.

What does this mean for you, our policy makers? It means investments in education (operational and capital), transportation (transit and roads), early childhood education, business development, and housing affordability for our low- *and* middle-income residents, to name a few. It also means giving businesses time to incorporate and catch up to recently enacted laws and regulations.

I will close with a final thought – the state has been developing substantive plans for many important issues. Examples include a 10-year plan for our educational system and a plan to ensure we are responding to the climate crisis. These are both imperative and important goals and ones that the Chamber strongly supports. Education directly ties to workforce and talent and our Chamber created the Green Business Certification program 12 years ago with the Department of Environment understanding the need for companies to green their practices.

And so, it is time for a call to action for the creation of a 10-year economic growth plan to support these initiatives. The Chamber has been actively partnering with our County government to develop and implement a county strategy for economic development and would love the opportunity to have a similar strategy at the state level.

I am looking forward continuing our work together. Please know that the Chamber is a trusted resource for you and your staff. The success of our economy is critical to everything we want to do in this county – if you have ideas, questions, or want to brainstorm with business leaders, let us help facilitate those conversations. A special thank you to those of you who have already reached out to discuss ideas and solicit feedback.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.