

Courthouse, 175 Main Street Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678 410-535-1600 • 301-855-1243 www.co.cal.md.us

September 15, 2015

Board of Commissioners
Mike Hart
Tom Hejl
Pat Nutter
Evan K. Slaughenhoupt Jr.
Steven R. Weems

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. President of the Senate State House, H-107 Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear Senator Miller:

We are writing to convey our concerns with the growing fiscal impact of State actions on local government.

We are elected to serve the citizens of Calvert County. One of our chief duties is to ensure that government is run in an efficient, cost-effective manner, making the best use of our local tax dollars for local priorities. However, we have found ourselves time and again embroiled in local requests for additional funds and/or staff to address shortfalls in areas that are part of the traditional scope of State funding. In effect, the State is creating an ad-hoc category in our local budget, and it is one that we have no ability to constrain or control.

This reallocation of costs from the State to local government has been growing at a pace that cannot be sustained. Our tax revenue remains stagnant, and local residents are struggling with the slow economy and downturn in the housing market. We cannot reconcile raising local taxes for the purpose of funding State shortfalls. This would further depress our local economy and create a precedent we do not wish to impose on our County residents.

These are a few examples of the impact on our County:

Health Department

As in all rural counties, health department personnel are State employees. The recent 2% COLA was budgeted for all State agencies **except for local health departments** (LHDs). In effect, this resulted in a 2% budget cut for LHDs. In order to maintain services in such areas as environmental health, disease surveillance, and substance abuse treatment, County funding will need to be increased to pay for a State-mandated cost.

In addition, pension costs for LHD employees have been shifted to the local level. The increase in this cost was dramatic during the previous administration and has eroded the health department's available funding for critical public health services, including mental health and emergency preparedness for natural disasters and bioterrorism.

This State-to-local cost shifting has exacerbated the harm done to LHDs, as a result of 50% decreases in State core funding since the recession. As a consequence of lost core funding, changes in pension costs, and unfunded COLAs since 2008, our health department has had to reduce its staffing by one-third. At the same time, emerging diseases, such as Ebola, vibrio, avian flu, and West Nile Virus require increased surveillance and a trained response staff, and the effects of heroin and other opioids on our community call for increased substance abuse and mental health services. In Calvert, as in almost every other rural county, the LHD is the primary source for behavioral health care.

Public Works

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. September 15, 2015 Page 2

Depletion of Highway User Revenue (HUR) is having a severe impact on local infrastructure maintenance. We have lost \$6 million per year in State funding, which is still collected through State tax on fuel, but reallocated to other State priorities.

Storm Water Management revised regulations have put an extra burden on development costs. The Environmental Site Design (ESD) to Maximum Extent Practical (MEP) component is cumbersome, costly, and has long-term maintenance issues and costs.

Community Planning and Building

In 2006, State mandates included the Water Resources Element and the Priority Preservation Element, which added additional layers to our Water Quality Testing and Land Preservation Programs.

In 2008, the new Critical Area regulations impacted all residential and commercial site plans, subdivisions, and building and grading permits.

In 2009, the State-mandated New Planning Visions, Smart Growth Measures and Indicators, and Plan Consistency Requirements impacted our Annual Report and Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments.

In 2010, the State released new Transportation Planning Requirements, which required updated responsibilities in our local Transportation Plan document.

In 2012, newly released requirements for Growth Tiers and Septic System restrictions impacted all residential site plans, subdivisions, and building & grading permits.

In addition to the items listed above, Calvert County now contributes to the State's pension plan for the benefit of our teachers. This estimated \$6 million expense is about 2.5% of our budget and was not a County expense as recently as four years ago. This essentially caused double taxation upon our citizens as the taxes they were paying towards this expense to the State, was not reduced.

We believe it is time for the State to acknowledge the budgetary impact of all of its decisions on local economy and work with us to determine what steps can be taken to preserve the ability of local jurisdictions to spend local tax dollars on local priorities and projects.

We look forward to an ongoing discussion on this issue over the next few months, prior to the next Legislative session.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

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The Honorable Stephen M. Waugh Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Waugh:

We are writing to convey our concerns with the growing fiscal impact of State actions on local government.

We are elected to serve the citizens of Calvert County. One of our chief duties is to ensure that government is run in an efficient, cost-effective manner, making the best use of our local tax dollars for local priorities. However, we have found ourselves time and again embroiled in local requests for additional funds and/or staff to address shortfalls in areas that are part of the traditional scope of State funding. In effect, the State is creating an ad-hoc category in our local budget, and it is one that we have no ability to constrain or control.

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The Honorable Mark N. Fisher Maryland House of Delegates House Office Building, Room 202 6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Fisher:

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cc: Governor Hogan



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The Honorable Michael A. Jackson Maryland House of Delegates House Office Building, Room 204 6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Jackson:

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The Honorable Anthony J. O'Donnell Maryland House of Delegates House Office Building, Room 201 6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate O'Donnell:

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