

February 20, 2009

Haddaway Bill for Non-Profit Organizations Moves Forward

A hearing was held this week on a bill introduced by Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio that would help non-profit organizations in the State of Maryland. The legislation would increase the threshold for financial reviews and audits to \$200,000 and \$500,000 respectively. Under current law, non-profit organizations with gross income from charitable contributions of \$100,000 or more are required to have a financial review by an independent certified public accountant. Non profits organizations with gross income from charitable contributions of \$200,000 or more are required to have an audit by an independent certified public accountant. Financial audits can cost on average \$10,000-\$20,000, meaning 10%-20% of a non-profit's budget could be diverted from their core mission for this purpose.

Haddaway said she was familiar with the issue having worked for a non-profit, so when Steve Osche, a certified public accountant with C-Biz Beatty Satchell, LLC in Easton, Maryland contacted her about it, she decided to take action right away. "Mr. Osche made the case that now would be a good time to change this outdated law and I agreed," Haddaway said. "In these tough economic times, our non-profit organizations need all the help they can get. His expertise in this area was very helpful as we formulated the legislation."

Haddaway, Osche and a representative from the Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations (MANO) testified in favor of the bill Tuesday. There was no opposition. Yesterday, only two days after the bill hearing, the legislation received a favorable report from the Business Regulation Subcommittee. It is expected to go before the full Economic Matters Committee for a vote on Friday.

Haddaway Supports Organic Farming Bill

Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio announced yesterday that she has cosponsored legislation that would help Maryland farmers interested in transitioning to organic farming. House Bill 449 establishes a three-year pilot program for current or would be organic producers and recognizes the growing demand for local, organic products in today's market. Haddaway testified on the bill with Delegate Roger Manno, the lead sponsor yesterday, stating that "while organics is not for everyone, it is an important part of the equation." She also added that the legislation would be particularly helpful in rural areas where farm land is threatened. "Increasing the viability of our farms is one of the best ways to keep agricultural land in agriculture," she said.

Curbing Underage Drinking

This week, Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio joined together with members from the Talbot County Blue Ribbon Commission and the Talbot Partnership to ask the legislature for tougher penalties on underage drinking. House Bill 251, which was introduced by Haddaway, would mandate that underage youth purchasing alcohol with a false identification would receive a mandatory, one year suspension of their driver's license.

Current law allows a court to order the suspension for only six months. The bill was heard in the House Judiciary Committee, where Haddaway and Gary Pierce of the Talbot Partnership made the case that underage drinking is still a problem in the State of Maryland, particularly in rural areas. Haddaway cited statistics that indicate that the Eastern Shore has the highest number of adolescents in treatment for alcohol abuse, the highest incidents of alcohol-related suspensions from school, more DUI arrests and more youth liquor law violations than any other jurisdiction. She also referenced the fact that underage drinking costs the state over \$1.2 billion a year in medical costs, lost time from work and pain and suffering expenses. “Changing societal acceptance of underage drinking is an important step toward prevention,” she said to the members of the Judiciary Committee. “This legislation would send a strong message that Maryland is serious about preventing underage drinking.”

Coming Up Next Week in the Economic Matters Committee

- Unemployment Insurance Expansion to Part-time Workers
- Renewable Energy Legislation
- Regulation of Pawn Brokers, Junk Dealers and Scrap Metal Processors (in response to the increase in metal theft)

For more information on this and other issues, please feel free to contact Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio's office by calling (410) 841-3429 or by emailing jeannie.haddaway@house.state.md.us.