STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Wes Moore

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate of Maryland
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
H-101 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I hereby veto two bills pertaining to gubernatorial appointments, Senate Bill 503 and House Bill 481 - *Washington County - Board of License Commissioners - Membership* and Senate Bill 972 - *Anne Arundel County - Board of License Commissioners - Alterations.*

While these bills focus on distinct boards and advance different processes, both undermine hundreds of years of precedent to ensure effective checks and balances between the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and local governments. Both bills effectively remove the role of the Governor in these appointment processes, setting a new paradigm for the state moving forward that, in my view, does not serve the people of Maryland well.

Senate Bill 503 and House Bill 481

This legislation sought to alter the membership of the Washington County Board of License Commissioners ("Board"). The Board regulates the retail sale of alcoholic beverages in Washington County. By law, the Board is composed of three members who each serve six-year terms, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Maryland Senate if the

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Senate is in session when the appointment is made. Each member of the Board is required to be a resident and voter of Washington County and must be "individuals of high character and integrity and of recognized business capacity."

Of particular importance, no more than two members of the three-member board may belong to the same political party, ensuring that no one party asserts full control of the Board. Senate Bill 503/House Bill 481 sought to change this party requirement to instead mandate that two members of the Board must belong to the political party that received the highest aggregated number of votes the preceding election for the Washington County Board of County Commissioners and that one member must belong to the political party that received the second highest number of votes. This change would have restricted the ability for Governors to appoint members based upon merit first and foremost. Further, the bill would likely result in the partisan makeup of the board remaining constant over time with little chance for the majority party to alternate as is more likely to happen through the gubernatorial appointments process. Should this bill have been enacted, it would put into question the integrity and public trust of the Board as it would have increased the likelihood that a single political party can assert longterm control over its functions.

Senate Bill 972

This legislation sought to alter the Anne Arundel County Board of License Commissioners which regulates the retail sale of alcoholic beverages, processes liquor licenses, and enforces the liquor laws within Anne Arundel County. Specifically, the bill sought to increase the size of the Anne Arundel County Board of License Commissioners from 3 to 5 and require the Governor to choose appointments from a list of individuals recommended by the members of the Anne Arundel County House *or* Senate delegations to the General Assembly. While I support increasing the size of this board to 5 members, as passed this legislation would have created ambiguity and confusion about the process for appointments and violated the longheld tradition of the Governor exercising appointment powers.

My first concern is in regards to the requirement that the Governor must select individuals to appoint from a list recommended by either the Anne Arundel County House *or* Senate delegations to the General Assembly. As these delegations may choose different individuals, it is unclear which would constitute the list to choose from. Should the House and Senate delegation recommendations be aggregated into a single list but the delegations are not aligned on the recommended individuals, it is unclear whether the names actually achieve enhanced local influence on the appointments to the Board. This confusion and lack of clear benefit raises serious concerns about the smooth operation of the Board as it carries out its important work.

Second, there is no minimum number of names that would have been required to be included on these lists of recommended individuals. Should the delegations submit only 5 names, this would have effectively provided a subset of the legislature with de facto appointment authority. This authority would set a new precedent regarding appointments to important boards and erode the constitutional power of appointment that resides with the Governor. This authority and oversight has long been an effective system and it is unclear what would motivate a departure from this process. At best, this is unnecessary change and, at worst, this removes important checks and balances from the process.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill 503, House Bill 481, and Senate Bill 907.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor