

increase, funds in the budget for a commensurate salary increase for the permanent employees of the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland. My objections to this legislation stem from the essentially local nature of the Tri-County Council; the absence of a direct relationship in the setting of salaries for council employees and State employees, as well as any connection between Council employees and the State personnel system; and the ability of the Council at present to request additional funding for salary increases from the four governmental units contributing to the operations of the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland.

The Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland functions as a local planning and development agency serving the region consisting of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties. As such, it "initiates and coordinates plans and projects for the development of human and economic resources of the Southern Maryland region as a Southern Maryland Planning and Development Agency." See, Md. Ann. Code, Art. 20, § 103 (1984 Cum. Supp.). The voting membership of the Council consists of those State Senators and Delegates representing the Tri-County region, three county commissioners from each county, a member of the Southern Maryland Municipal Association, and several at large members from the counties represented. Maryland law makes clear that the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland exists as a regional independent entity created to serve Southern Maryland.

Since its inception the Council has received operating subsidies from the 3 represented Southern Maryland counties as well as from State and Federal government sources. While the local governments represented on the Council are required under existing law to provide at least minimal funding, any State contribution is unrestricted. Yet, if House Bill 248 was signed into law, the State would have the singular responsibility of funding certain salary increases. Procedurally, each year the Council submits to the Department of Economic and Community Development a budget proposal outlining the sources and amounts of anticipated operating revenues, such as funding provided by the Southern Maryland counties, plus a request for partial State funding to support its remaining operating costs. Existing funding mechanisms seem adequate to meet legitimate salary requirements.

Under existing law, the Tri-County Council possesses full discretion to employ persons and "prescribe their duties and fix their compensation." See, Md. Ann. Code, Art. 20 § 2-301(i) (1984 Cum. Supp.). Clearly, should a salary increase be appropriate for employees of the Council, the Council has full authority to selectively or collectively modify the salary levels. Salary levels, numbers of employees and any contemplated pay increases for Council employees must be viewed by the Council in the light of other needs and possible fiscal constraints. Requiring Statewide pay increases to be automatically given to Council employees effectively takes that part of the Council's budget