

Testimony of Barton Ross, AIA
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Before the
Ways and Means Committee
February 18, 2021

Pertaining To: HB0865 Historic Revitalization Tax Credit –
Small Commercial Projects – Alterations
Support

My name is Barton Ross, and I am an historic architect and small business owner whose practice is focused exclusively on working with older buildings. I am here today on behalf of Maryland's statewide chapter of the American Institute of Architects, which represents 2,000 Architects across the state. Many of our members conduct research, advocate for, and successfully work on historic tax credit projects.

What this Bill Does

When it was established in 2015, the Small Commercial Historic Revitalization Tax Credit received an authorization for up to \$4 million in credits. Unfortunately, this initial authorized amount was depleted this past summer, which speaks to the overall popularity of the program as a tool for community revitalization. This proposed bill would immediately replenish the authorization with a reasonable ask.

Why You Should Vote for This Bill

I live in Chestertown, one of the select places in America recognized as a National Historic Landmark, and serve on the Main Street Design Committee. We have found small businesses overwhelmingly favor historic tax credits for commercial buildings. Unique, older structures accessible to pedestrians are particularly attractive to entrepreneurs and local owners. In an era where online shopping has elevated experiential retail to newfound importance, businesses seek buildings with architectural character to stand apart and attract customers. These projects are not inexpensive, often undertaken on the hundreds of main streets in every county in our state, and can be a central element for local success, if financing is available.

Please invest in Maryland's built environment, economy, and future by increasing the funding for the State Historic Tax Credit program and support HB0865. Thank you.

Support