



**LETTER OF SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF
MARYLAND TOURISM COALITION**

IN SUPPORT OF HB0612 – RELIEF ACT

Before the Ways and Means Committee, February 4, 2021

Dear Madam Chair & Committee Members,

My name is Ruth Toomey, Executive Director of Maryland Tourism Coalition, a 50-year-old organization that represents the various services, attractions, organizations and accommodations that make up the State's Industry. MTC is the voice of our state's diverse tour and travel community, bringing together the entire industry to enhance business growth and to promote Maryland as a first-class destination for visitors. On behalf of our 1,000+ members, I would like to express our support of HB0612.

Tourism is vital to Maryland's economy! In a typical year, tourism supports 226,000 direct and indirect jobs, making it the 11th largest industry in the state. Visitors to Maryland spend nearly \$18.6 billion in Maryland each year and those same visitors generate close to \$2.6 billion in state and local taxes. Without tourism in the state of Maryland, each household would pay \$1,175 more in local taxes.

But as we all know, this past year has been anything but typical. Our industry was among the hardest hit due to the pandemic. Many of our members have been forced to close and some are even now unable to reopen. 95% of all tourism businesses are small businesses and many are hanging on by a thread. The RELIEF Act is absolutely essential for our small businesses to survive during and post-pandemic. We plead with the committee to help us save our industry by passing this bill which provides a \$300 million commitment to supporting 55,000 small businesses with sales tax credits and Extends unemployment tax relief for small businesses, staving off sudden and substantial tax hikes in 2021. On top of that, The RELIEF Act's loan and grant forgiveness plan would safeguard Maryland business owners against any tax increase triggered by the use of state loan or grant funds. This relief would come at a net zero cost to the state while saving businesses an estimated \$40 million. These funds are necessary for our tourism businesses to survive. We would also like to ask the committee to support the additional \$520 million investment proposed by the Senate President.

The recovery of Maryland's economy will be built on the success of the tourism industry. Now is the time to invest in not just the businesses, but all the people that make up this industry. On behalf of the Maryland Tourism Coalition, we respectfully request that you support HB0612.

Sincerely,

Ruth Toomey

Ruth Toomey
MTC Executive Director