



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Testimony in Support with Amendment of
Senate Bill 734 – Transportation – Highways – Tourist Areas and Corridor Signage Program
Finance Committee
March 8, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports with amendments Senate Bill 734 - Transportation - Highways - Tourist Areas and Corridor Signage Program. This bill establishes the Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program to create a system of supplemental guide signs to direct motorists to eligible individual attractions by directing the motorists first to groups of attractions; requiring the Administration to conduct a certain investigation on signing feasibility and prepare a signing plan if the Eligibility Committee approves an attraction's application; requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$350,000 to the Program for fiscal year and generally relating to the Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) welcomes the opportunity to highlight tourist areas and corridors throughout the State. Agritourism is one of the fastest growing segments of agricultural direct marketing taking place in rural areas across the State. Agritourism allows farmers to diversify their core operations and keep farmland in production while preserving scenic vistas and maintaining farming traditions. Agritourism helps educate the public about the importance of agriculture to a community's economic base, quality of life, history, and culture.

The Council would like the SB734 amended to include agritourism as a 'category of attractions' and would like the timing restrictions to include those that might be seasonal. The strict timing requirements could greatly limit the number of rural sites that would be eligible to participate in this program, especially those that are seasonal attractions (e.g., a pumpkin patch). Amendments are included on the second page of this testimony.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support with amendments of Senate Bill 734.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”

Senate Bill 734
Amendments

1. On Page 3, Line 16, Strike “AND”.
2. On Page 3, Line 17 after “YEAR”, add “AND” and on line 18 add “5. Except for certain Seasonal Agritourism attractions.”
3. On Page 4, Line 23, add “AND” and on Line 24 add “Agritourism Attractions”.