



14 South Main Street
Berlin, MD 21811
BeachesBaysWaterWays.com
info@BeachtoBayHeritage.org
410-251-3163

BOARD MEMBERS

Russ Blake, **TREASURER**
Mindie Burgoyne, **PRESIDENT**
Christina Carlson
Michael Day
Jack Lenox
Aaron Levinthal
Dr. Mona Margarita, **SECRETARY**
George Ojje-Ahamiojie
Melanie Pursel, **VICE PRESIDENT**
Carrie Samis
Cynthia Stevens
Dr. Clara Small
Eddie Somers
Laura Soper
Clint Sterling
Ivy Wells
Lee Whaley
Bill Wilson
Liz Wist

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lisa Challenger

PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Andre Nieto Jaime

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Issue: SUPPORT SB0980

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: March 26, 2025

The Beach to Bay Heritage Area is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative SB0980 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

These are difficult times for our state, and the Maryland Heritage Area program is part of the solution. With community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies, this program has a proven record of return on investment that is stunning: \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

The Beach to Bay Heritage Area is a state-certified heritage area, covering Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties. Our region has recognized the profound economic and cultural value of heritage tourism, not only bringing visitors to the state but also enhancing our communities for residents.

Right now, there is an \$8 million funding gap each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities.

This legislation queues up Maryland for future growth! Please support SB0980. Please invest in Maryland's heritage. Please invest in Maryland's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Challenger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Challenger" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Challenger
Executive Director