



February 20, 2025

Chairwoman Atterbeary
Lowe House Office Building, Ways and Means Committee
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Good morning, Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1016. My name is Mac Campbell, and I am proud to serve as the Executive Director of the Baltimore Convention Center (BCC).

Historically, the Baltimore Convention Center has been a strong investment, generating nearly \$30 million in state tax revenue and \$12.6 million for the city annually—over \$440 million in tax revenue over a decade—while supporting thousands of jobs, many belonging to City residents. But today, I stand before you with both urgency and optimism—because while the BCC remains an asset to our city and state, it is at a crossroads.

Since reopening after serving as a COVID-19 field hospital, we've faced greater challenges—fewer conventions, rising operational costs, and increased competition from cities with newer, better-equipped facilities. In FY23, we generated just \$17 million in combined state and city taxes as major events went elsewhere.

Meanwhile, convention centers of our size receive \$5–8 million annually for upkeep. The BCC has received just \$400,000 since its last renovation in 1996—never adjusted for inflation. Our team works tirelessly to keep the doors open, but we are literally holding the building together with patch kits and glue.

The reality is, we are falling behind. Yet, there is so much potential. We know that with the right investment, Baltimore can compete—and win. We saw that firsthand when we secured the 2033 ASAE Annual Meeting, one of the most prestigious conventions in our industry. To put what this win means into perspective, the average immediate economic impact of the ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition is between \$15-18 million over four days, with the annual meeting host cities reliably expecting 20% of attendees to book future business in the host city within 5 years. That win puts money in the pockets of our residents and proves that people want to come to Baltimore. They believe in our city. But we must give them a facility that meets modern expectations.

HB 1016 is not the final answer, but it is the next step. It creates the Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority, providing the structure needed to move forward strategically and sustainably. For years, the Convention Center delivered a 4:1 return on investment for the state—an impact driven by Baltimore's unique funding model, where the city does not collect sales tax, allowing the state to see the greatest financial benefit. While that ratio hasn't held since COVID, we know it can again—if we can close more business and remain competitive. This bill lays the foundation to turn that vision into reality—one that will benefit Marylanders across the state, from Baltimore's District 40 with Delegate Wells, to down the road in Howard County's District 13 with Chairwoman Atterbeary, and all the way to Delegate Hartman's constituents in Wicomico County.

We also know that our success is built on the people who work inside the BCC every day. Many of our union workers are Baltimore City residents, and they take immense pride in making this facility run at the



highest level despite its challenges. We owe it to them to provide the tools and the environment they need to succeed, and we are committed to ensuring their place in our future.

I urge you to not just take my word for it. Come visit the BCC. See for yourself what we're up against—and what is possible. I have also provided photos that document the state of our building—real incidents that have taken place during real events—because this is not just about numbers; it's about ensuring that each of you know what is standing in the way of Baltimore remaining competitive for years to come. It's also about recognizing the work and dedication of the men and women who keep our building going, and who are upholding the reputation of the BCC, and Maryland, despite the corroded pipes and flooded lobbies. A fresh coat of paint won't fix a crumbling foundation—real change requires rebuilding from the ground up, and with your support, this authority model can be that newly poured foundation.

An investment in the BCC is an investment in Maryland's future—one that creates jobs, strengthens businesses, and drives tourism spending statewide. House Bill 1016 is the next critical step in making that future a reality. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mac Campbell, CVE
Executive Director
Baltimore Convention Center