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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1541
TASK FORCE ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN MARYLAND
Ways & Means Committee
March 5, 2020

Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on HB1541, Task Force on the Tourism Industry in Maryland. The purpose of this bill is to establish a task force to review and assess the State's tourism industry and make recommendations regarding additional funding, training and other resources needed to increase diversity and inclusion in the tourism industry.

The Tourism Act of 2008 required the Maryland Tourism Development Board to provide grants of not less than \$2.5 million to destination marketing organizations (DMO's) for the purpose of attracting visitors to the State. In FY2019, three out of the twenty-five jurisdictions (all 23 counties plus Baltimore City and Ocean City) received more than 14%; the remaining counties received significantly less with Baltimore County receiving less than 1%.

By creating a task force, we can better assess how funds are allocated and the basis for the imbalance. Expanding the industry to cultivate a more diverse environment will showcase and highlight the enriched culture our state has to offer.

HB1541 will allow the opportunity for collaboration amongst the key stakeholders to properly analyze ways to cultivate more tourism by expanding marketing, include diversity to reach small businesses and the African American community and the potential for increase funding and development of a comprehensive plan to expand the tourism industry in Maryland.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

Benjamin Brooks