



Testimony to:
Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Name: Elizabeth Scott Shatto, Executive Director
Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA)
Issue: **Senate Bill 926 Economic Development – Maryland Stadium Authority – Hagerstown Multi-Use 2 Sports and Events Facility.**
Position: Support

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area has good reason to support Senate Bill 926 and the development of a new minor league baseball stadium in Hagerstown. While our role is to invest in and support the development of heritage tourism product, we know that the broader offerings of our destination are what inspire a visitor to choose our area over other places for their leisure time and spending.

As stated in our Management Plan, under the heading of Various & Distinctive Commercial offerings, “Travelers do not live by history and Civil War sites alone.” The 2005 plan goes on to specifically mention Washington County’s abundance of sports and recreation activities as having capacity to grow and do more for heritage tourism, calling out Hagerstown Suns Baseball in a chart of attractions. Sadly, the contraction of the Minor League Hagerstown Suns by Major League Baseball, with the added complication of the pandemic, has limited Hagerstown’s ability to deliver what Civil War travelers want when they are not on the battlefield or exploring a history museum: memorable hospitality services – restaurants, lodging, and shopping opportunities – as part of their leisure experiences. The good news is that Hagerstown and the surrounding small towns are well situated to rise to the opportunities that will come with the business stimulated by a new minor league baseball stadium - bed and breakfasts and hotels, and Main Street shopping, restaurants and craft beverage makers are poised to respond to demand that will come with the stadium.

In terms of heritage experiences, our partners continue to develop new and diverse ways to draw audiences. Space does not permit me to enumerate, but some of the most exciting, most inclusive, and most sophisticated new tourism products seen in decades are about to open in Washington County. Yet, when heritage travelers weigh their choices as they plan vacations, it can often be the array of additional amenities that determines where leisure time will be spent. A new stadium will certainly help pull the scales in the direction of Hagerstown for folks deciding where their discretionary spending will find the best balance of opportunity for their families.

Of course, in the minds of many Americans, Washington County is the very place where baseball originated. Legend has it that during the Civil War, General Abner Doubleday occupied the hill and played (and created the game of) baseball on the field below what is now known as Doubleday Hill. This is recognized to be a myth, but the romance of baseball and the Civil War calls to visitors and we happily welcome them while gently debunking the myth. And it is true that Doubleday and his men were briefly bunkered down along the Potomac River, just a few miles from where the new stadium will be built. Surely, Hagerstown is the place for Maryland’s next minor league baseball stadium, and without delay.

I urge your support of Senate Bill 926.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Scott Shatto".

Elizabeth Scott Shatto
Executive Director

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