

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Senate Budget and Tax Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Senate Bill -926: “Economic Development – Maryland Stadium Authority – Hagerstown Multi–Use Sports and Events Facility”

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Budget and Tax Committee:

The Greater Hagerstown Committee (GHC) strongly supports SB-926 “Economic Development – Maryland Stadium Authority – Hagerstown Multi–Use Sports and Events Facility”. This bill is critical in advancing a catalytic project in our community that will bring vitality, activity, investment, and disposable income to an area in need of support.

GHC has made “Building Vibrant Urban Centers” a major goal in our strategic plan since being founded in 1987. We see strong urban centers as a means to attract quality companies and workforce talent to our county, as well as provide a better quality of life for our citizens. As did most American cities, Hagerstown suffered the negative impacts of a national migration decades ago from urban centers to the suburbs. Jobs moved outside the city, the housing stock changed from predominately owner occupied to rental properties, and many of our historic buildings became vacant. For over 40 years, our community has worked tirelessly to change the tide and restore our urban centers back to a destination location for all. We are seeing slow progress but have had success when we’ve invested in catalytic infrastructure projects such as the University System of Maryland – Hagerstown, Barbara Ingram School for the Arts, a new regional library, expanded Maryland Theatre, a Cultural Trail, or new parking structures. Nearly all of these projects were only made possible through partnerships with the State and the private community.

GHC sees a new multi-use sports and events facility in our downtown as the catalyst to take our revitalization efforts to the next level. From study of how these facilities have impacted other communities, this project will:

- Revitalize our struggling core
- Increase our tax base to provide local governments more money to invest in critical services like police, EMS, education, etc.
- Diversify housing opportunities
- Expand offerings in our Arts and Entertainment District
- Incentivize investors to repurpose and reuse long vacant buildings – particularly upper floors
- Attract 200,000 to 400,000 people into the City’s core for events, games and concerts to bring more disposable income downtown that will sustain and support the many small businesses in this area
- Attract new businesses and new residential development to an area of great need
- Attract young and upwardly mobile people to the City’s core to live, work, and play
- Create walk-to-work jobs for disadvantaged neighborhoods

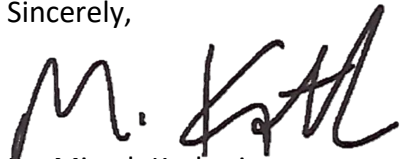


Our community is doing all we can on our side to prepare for this project. We have a local ownership group that will be investing millions to buy and build an expansion team for the Atlantic League. We are also investing in supporting infrastructure such as the final phase of our cultural trail (a key amenity that will complement the facilities design) and an \$8M new parking deck that will not only support this facility, but also the reuse of the many vacant buildings in our A&E District as investors are drawn to this area.

We are asking for your support of SB-926 to bring life to Hagerstown's urban core. This bill will authorize the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) to partner with Washington County on this endeavor and bring this catalytic project to a reality. MSA has proven to be a trusted, successful State organization to oversee projects of this magnitude – a project that smaller rural communities like ours would struggle to do on our own. MSA has successfully built stadiums and projects to areas east of us, and this bill will allow them to build their first project in Western Maryland.

We thank the Chair and members of the committee for your continued public service to all in our great state and would appreciate your support for SB-926.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Kothari', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Mitesh Kothari,
GHC Chair

The Greater Hagerstown Committee is comprised of corporate and civic executive leaders from over 75 local companies and organizations, employing over 10,000 people in Washington County from across the four-state area. GHC is funded solely by member dues and works collaboratively to be a catalyst for progress and growth in the Washington County, MD region.



Greater Hagerstown Committee

MEMBERSHIP LISTING 2020-2021

(as of 02/10/21)

*Executive Committee ♦Committee Chair ♦Lifetime member ♦Charter Member

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Hagerstown, MD 21740
(301) 733-8811
www.greaterhagerstown.org

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7. Bowen, Taylor – Berkshire Hathaway Bowen Realty
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