

Testimony of Natalie Henshaw  
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Before the  
Senate Finance Committee  
March 17, 2021

Pertaining To: SB903, Historic Revitalization Tax Credits- Small Commercial Projects -  
Alterations  
*Support*

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On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of history and preservation in Maryland.

Preservation Maryland is the statewide voice for historic preservation that works to protect the best of Maryland. Since 1931, we have worked tirelessly to protect the places, stories and communities in Maryland that matter. Through our Campaign for Historic Trades, we have worked to increase opportunities for all Americans to enter the preservation trades and help restore the nation's vast and irreplaceable heritage.

Why this Bill Matters

Across the nation, thousands of construction jobs go unfilled – a quiet crisis that grows each day. The problem is only magnified for the historic trades which also suffer from a lack of new entrants into the workforce. At the same time, from Garrett to Somerset County and everywhere in between, Maryland has a huge stock of historic structures, and it's a number that grows every year. In order to address the challenge of an ever growing stock of historic structures and a dearth of qualified professionals to work on them, SB903 seeks to support the skilled preservation trades training of Marylanders who can then enter the workforce ready to help restore the state's historic built environment.

What this Bill Does

This legislation establishes the Traditional Trades Apprentice Fund within the Department of Labor to support workforce development programs in Maryland that provide training in the traditional trades and, upon completion of the programs, help place apprentices in private and public sector jobs. The bill would direct a portion of

federal financial assistance to the state into the fund to support the training of participants in such programs.

### Why You Should Vote for This Bill

Maryland boasts a long and vibrant history. One of the benefits of that is a large stock of historic structures and buildings in every corner of our state. Indeed, Maryland has over 1,500 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, a program of the National Department of the Interior and the National Parks Service, which recognizes districts, buildings, structures, objects, and sites for their significance in American history, archeology, architecture, engineering, or culture, and identifies them as worthy of preservation. Every day, more buildings in Maryland become eligible for the Register. Buildings on the National Register of Historic Places require work done to the Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Preservation. Therefore, specialized training is needed to ensure work complies with these standards.

As the historic building stock increases, there is a demand for more labor skilled and versed in historic preservation. Unfortunately, there is currently a shortage of trained preservation tradespeople. SB903 would help address this crisis by investing in workforce training in the traditional trades through apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. Participants would work on historic preservation projects in the state of Maryland and at the conclusion of their experience would be eligible for non-competitive federal hiring or are abundantly qualified to enter the private sector in several well-paid trades such as finish carpentry, frame carpentry, roofing, masonry and painting. One such program in Maryland, the Traditional Trades Apprenticeship Program located out of the Historic Preservation Training Center in Frederick, MD, supports six months of paid, on-the-job instruction in one of America's national parks, plus post-training job placement services.

SB903 would help both large and small employers in the constructions and preservation sector. Historic trades inherently encompass a broad range of trades, and this presents opportunities for partnerships and to upskill and "side skill" related trades. Large commercial jobs on historic buildings would benefit from trades people trained in historic preservation, and employers will benefit from having pipelines of employees who are guaranteed to get supplementary education, improving their work quality. Historic trades are often performed by sole proprietors, rather than large companies, but training costs hours and money, which are often in short supply with individual craftspeople. SB903 would benefit those smaller employers and sole proprietors who want to train young people, but don't necessarily have the funds or capacity to do so.

It is also worth noting that the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020 provides up to \$9.5 billion in dedicated funding over five years (\$1.9 billion per year) for much needed repairs of the National Park Service and other federal agencies. The NPS deferred maintenance backlog alone has ballooned to \$12 billion, of which 47 percent is for historic assets. That means there will be a massive need for skilled preservation tradespeople to undertake that work. Marylanders who go through preservation trades apprenticeships thanks to SB903 will be ready to fill those positions.

As its stock of historic structures increases every year, Maryland will benefit from having a highly skilled workforce in historic buildings. There are shortages in construction labor and higher shortages in skilled labor, and apprenticeship training supported by SB903 will help alleviate that glut. Historic preservation of Maryland's already built environment is a widely embraced and successful solution to many of the economic and neighborhood revitalization challenges facing Maryland's communities today. SB903 would help with this by supporting the job training of skilled preservation tradespeople to help in the revitalization movement.

In 2019, construction accounted for 4% of the labor market with over 7 million jobs, with projected increases in the next decade. Because of the volume of historic buildings in Maryland and across the nation, preservation work is not niche; it's simply a facet of the broader construction industry. SB903 would have a direct and positive impact on a vital sector of the economy, while bolstering workforce development and preserving our state's historic built environment.

SB903 is an investment in Maryland's workforce and its heritage. Therefore, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB903.

**Support**