

Testimony of S. Elizabeth (Lisa) Sasser, AIA  
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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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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of the preservation trades, and why SB309 is such an important investment in Maryland's heritage and workforce.

**Why the Bill is Needed**

As an historical architect, a graduate of the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center trades training program, and as a member of the Preservation Maryland Board, I've been engaged with Maryland's historic places – from Washington County to the Eastern Shore – for more than 35 years.

Maryland has more than 1500 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, along with some 200 historic districts. From iconic sites like Ft. McHenry and the Maryland State House, to lively historic districts in cities and small towns, these places are drivers of tourism, commerce and economic development. Ensuring that these places are preserved, restored and rehabilitated to the benefit of local economies demands an adequate supply of tradespeople with the specialized skills required to work on historic structures. In addition to knowledge of construction generally, work on historic buildings requires an understanding of materials, tools and techniques not found in contemporary construction. Work on historic structures must be also be completed in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. The stock of historic structures increases every year. Shortages in construction labor and higher shortages in skilled labor have been extensively documented. Apprenticeship training will help alleviate that shortage, particularly for high demand, highly skilled workers.

## **What the Bill Does**

SB309 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. The Bill will provide training in the traditional building trades. Graduates of the program will receive assistance in finding public and private sector jobs. Some federal financial assistance to the state will be directed to the fund to support traditional trades training. Maryland is home to the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center (HPTC) in Frederick, Maryland. HPTC has been training tradespeople in the traditional trades since 1977 and has partnered with Preservation Maryland to develop and fully implement the Traditional Trades Apprenticeship Program. With the support of the Traditional Trades Apprenticeship Fund, the HPTC/Preservation Maryland partnership will allow these trainees can transition into full apprenticeships in the Maryland workforce.

SB903 would also benefit smaller employers and sole proprietors who want to train young people, but don't necessarily have the funds or capacity to do so. Training costs hours and money, often in short supply with individual craftspeople. Historic trades are often performed by sole proprietors, rather than large companies. These small businesses are often owned by the most highly skilled tradespeople who are in the position to pass on traditional skills otherwise in danger of being lost, by being able to offer apprenticeships to young people who could then carry on these skills.

The National Park Service and Preservation Maryland are partnering on The Campaign for Historic Trades through which apprenticeships will align with accredited degree programs, so apprentices can earn while they learn. SB 309 will help support this. This offers a path to addressing the crisis of higher education costs and student load debt in this country, while offering a pathway to well-paying jobs that can't be "offshored".

## **Why You Should Support This Bill**

Historic Preservation is a Maryland success story. Maryland's unique cultural attractions draw visitors from around the world and support countless local businesses while providing nearly \$320 million in local and state tax revenue and generating \$1.3 billion in economic activity annually. Maryland will benefit from having a highly skilled workforce in historic buildings. The stock of historic structures increases every year. There are shortages in construction labor and higher shortages in skilled labor. Apprenticeship training will help alleviate that need. In 2019, construction accounted for 4% of the labor market with over 7 million jobs, with projected increases in the next decade. This bill

would have a direct and positive impact on a vital sector of the economy as well as helping young people find new and rewarding career pathways.