

Testimony of Nicholas A. Redding
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Before the
House Appropriations Committee
February 8, 2022
Pertaining To: HB443, Maryland Corps – Revisions
Support

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, preservation, and service 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 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 tremendous stock of historic structures, and it's a number that grows every year. To address the challenge of caring for our historic structures and a lack of qualified professionals to work on them, HB443 seeks, in addition to many other worthy goals, to support training the next generation of historic tradespeople who can help restore the state's historic built environment and who will be qualified to start a career in the well-paid field of historic preservation trades.

What this Bill Does

This legislation establishes and funds a quasi-public agency focused on bringing service opportunities across Maryland into the 21st century by removing barrier to entry so that those who stand to benefit most from service years can participate in the program and by building new pathways to service through scaling up service slots within existing organizations, incentivizing large-scale employers to offer service year opportunities, and

building opportunities within State and local government. This legislation also includes a provision requiring the new Corps to help jumpstart a Maryland Historic Trades Corps to support regionally based work crews of young adults and veterans tasked with the rehabilitation of Maryland's historic resources.

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 tens of thousands of structures which contribute to historic districts listed on 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 as they age and become part of our collective history. 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 documented and severe shortage of trained preservation tradespeople. HB443 would help address this crisis by investing in workforce training in the traditional trades through a Maryland Historic Trades Corps program. Participants would gain valuable experience on historic preservation projects in the state of Maryland, and at the conclusion of their experience would be abundantly qualified to enter the private sector, begin a job with the State of Maryland, or join one of Maryland's many trade unions to pursue a career in a variety of fields, including finish carpentry, frame carpentry, roofing, masonry and painting. There is a similarly focused federal program, the Traditional Trades Apprenticeship Program, which supports six months of paid, on-the-job instruction in one of America's national parks, plus post-training job placement services. The Maryland Historic Trades Corps would seek to replicate the federal program's success, while focusing on recruiting young adults and veterans to work on exclusively Maryland based historic resources.

As its stock of historic structures increases every year, Maryland will benefit from having a highly skilled workforce in historic rehabilitation. There are shortages in construction labor and higher shortages in skilled labor, and training supported by HB443 will help alleviate that challenge. 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. HB443 would help with this by supporting the job training of skilled preservation tradespeople to help in the revitalization movement through service in a corps model. 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.

The far-reaching impact of training in the traditional trades has been recognized by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), an independent federal agency that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of our nation's historic resources. In 2020, the ACHP convened a *Traditional Trades Training Task Force* which adopted a lengthy policy statement on the future of this field. In part, that policy statement explained that:

Traditional trades are critically important to preserving the heritage of our historic built environment for future generations. They also can translate into secure, well-paying jobs that help revitalize communities both physically and economically. Expanding training opportunities and networks in the traditional trades is essential, and to do so, we must make pathways into this important field more accessible to the American worker.

HB443 builds on the recommendations of the ACHP policy statement and invests in the future of Maryland's historic places, State Parks, and a new generation of traditional tradespeople. Without trained and talented hands – we simply will be unable to maintain our state's vast, varied, and irreplaceable heritage.

HB443 is an investment in Maryland's workforce and its heritage. Therefore, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB443.

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