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Vice Chair
Economic Matters Committee



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HB602 - Board of Public Works - Sotterley Plantation - Operating Grant

Good afternoon Madame Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee. For the record, Vice Chair Brian Crosby presenting HB602 - Board of Public Works - Sotterley Plantation - Operating Grant.

This bill will provide a total of \$1.5 million in funding for Historic Sotterley from FY24 to FY26. Historic Sotterley is a UNESCO Site of Memory and a National Historic Landmark dedicated to telling the whole story of Sotterley. Through the work of descendants of the enslaved, the owners, and laborers, Historic Sotterley has been bringing the community together to foster a healing and understanding dialogue about all parts of their legacy, including slavery. Historic Sotterley has been dedicated to this holistic teaching for more than two decades – longer than most sites in the nation. Historic Sotterley is a model for other historical sites around the nation for conversations about equity.

Historic Sotterley has 94 acres of land and over 20 historic buildings in need of maintenance and infrastructure improvements to ensure its preservation for generations to come. Two of the biggest restorations will be the Manor House and the Slave Cabin along with new restrooms, collections storage, and improvements addressing enhanced safety and efficiency.

Historic Sotterley is working with MSDE to provide educational programs and expand their curriculum to include environmental programs. Sotterley is also seeking to expand its Common Ground Initiative which brings together descendants and our community to provide education, resources, remembrance, and to aid in healing, through the interpretation of authentic history.

This is an important community resource for education, remembrance, and volunteerism. Historic Sotterley is the standard in holistic education that teaches all aspects of our shared history. For all these reasons, I ask the committee for a favorable report.