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Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

RE: SB 517 – Port of Deposit State Historical Park – Included Areas

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Senate EEE Committee Members:

On behalf of the Cecil County Senators (myself and Senator Hershey) I introduce SB517 Port of Deposit State Historical Park – Included Areas. This is a corrective emergency bill that results from SB 541, the Great Maryland Outdoors Act that we passed last year.

Very late in last year's session, the Port of Deposit State Park was amended into SB541 designating three properties to be transferred to DNR on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Rather than possibly slowing down the parks bill SB 541 last year, we decided to come back the following session, which is this session, to address any possible concerns with this transfer. The legislation last year also called for the creation of an advisory committee and a report from DNR to be presented to the General Assembly.

I've provided you all with a copy of the official report from DNR, which offers several recommendations, none of which can be accomplished by June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, which is when this property would be turned over to DNR if no action is taken in this session. SB 517 will provide the flexibility needed to accomplish these recommendations. The bill simply gives flexibility to the number of acres, removes a costly property, and most importantly gives the flexibility of time to resolve these complex issues.

The property listed in last year's bill (SB541) is formerly the Bainbridge U.S. Naval Training Center (Bainbridge), which began the process of decommissioning in 1988.

In 1999, the Bainbridge Development Corporation (BDC) was established as a public instrumentality of the state to develop the former training center. The BDC is managed by the Executive director and governed by a 15-member Board of Directors, composed of nine residents of Cecil County and representatives of State Agencies.

The property includes The Historic Tome School for Boys, The Snow Hill Archeological Site, and a Wooded Conservation Area.

DNR listed the following challenges facing the park project which include:

1. Land restrictions that require a renegotiation of an MOU with the Navy
2. Property condition and environmental concerns that would be at the states sole expense to remediate and would require the state to renegotiate the terms of the MOA with the U.S. Navy
3. Access Issues that would require the construction of a road to lead to the property and steep terrain that would make the properties difficult to connect.
4. Funding needs ranging from \$10-100 million and an estimated \$40 million for roads and infrastructure

The DNR report provided the following recommendations to the General Assembly:

- Reconsider the deadline
- Alter the Size and Scope of the project
- Address the funding considerations
- Address revenue opportunities
- Focus on existing efforts

The DNR report concluded that “more due diligence is needed to adequately determine the type and level of public access that may be possible or even practicable given the physical, environmental, archaeological, historical, and legal constraints on these sites.

The deadlines and constraints codified in statute by the General Assembly, unaccompanied by a funding source, do not allow for that type of due diligence to occur. Allowing time and flexibility to conduct a more thorough planning process that includes robust stakeholder engagement at all levels is needed.

This will present the best opportunity for developing a clear, common, shared vision for the future of the sites together with the identification of potential resources to achieve the shared vision. Such a process would yield much better results and provide the greatest chance of achieving success for the community and the State of Maryland.”

Allowing this property to be transferred without addressing the many red flags listed in the report would, in my estimation be putting forward bad policy that would no doubt fall on the backs of our taxpayers.

I believe SB 517 will allow us more time and flexibility to do our due diligence moving forward with this property. I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report on this emergency local bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Gallion". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Jason Gallion