



HB 1038 - Transportation - Highways - Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program - 3/2/2023 SUPPORT

On behalf of Grow & Fortify and our client associations (Brewers Association of Maryland, Maryland Distillers Guild and Maryland Wineries Association), we offer our strong support for HB 1038/SB 734.

This legislation would ensure that the Tourist Area Corridor Signage Program remains adequately funded and creates a system of supplemental guide signs to direct tourists to eligible attractions. Many of Maryland's craft beverage alcohol producers meet the eligibility requirements laid forth and would directly benefit from increased tourist visibility along Maryland's roadways.

Maryland's craft beverage alcohol producers are integral to Maryland tourism and to the state's economy, providing nearly \$1.3 billion in economic impact and supporting more than 8,500 full-time jobs. This signage program would ensure that these local small businesses and industries are made more visible to tourists and state residents seeking recreational, cultural and leisure opportunities throughout the state.

This legislation would directly impact small businesses in every corner of Maryland. Breweries, wineries and distilleries are often located on properties located on smaller or rural routes. The signage program covered in this bill would provide a clear guide and demarcation for travelers and help increase state tax revenues at these locations through increased consumer and tourist spending.

This legislation would provide additional support to these industries and simultaneously address current concerns:

- Small businesses in this industry that meet the current criteria continue to receive application denials citing a lack of funding;
- A lack of signage for these industries delivers the false impression that local breweries, distilleries and wineries are not valuable to tourism in Maryland;
- Tourists and visitors to surrounding states in our region see signage promoting local craft beverage alcohol producers when traveling.

This legislation will directly benefit local small businesses by increasing consumer awareness about these manufacturers and would assist tourists seeking recreational and leisure activities while traveling throughout Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

