

Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Testimony in Support with Amendment of
House Bill 1038 – Transportation – Highways – Tourist Areas and Corridor Signage Program
Environment and Transportation Committee
March 2, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports with amendments House Bill 1038 - Transportation - Highways - Tourist Areas and Corridor Signage Program. This bill establishes the Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program to create a system of supplemental guide signs to direct motorists to eligible individual attractions by directing the motorists first to groups of attractions; requires the Administration to conduct a certain investigation on signing feasibility and prepare a signing plan if the Eligibility Committee approves an attraction's application; requires the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$350,000 to the Program for fiscal year and generally relating to the Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) welcomes the opportunity to highlight tourist areas and corridors throughout the State. Agritourism is one of the fastest growing segments of agricultural direct marketing taking place in rural areas across the State. Agritourism allows farmers to diversify their core operations and keep farmland in production while preserving scenic vistas and maintaining farming traditions. Agritourism helps educate the public about the importance of agriculture to a community's economic base, quality of life, history, and culture.

RMC would like this bill amended to include agritourism on the list found on page 4, Section (F)(2), lines 17 through 24 that includes the categories for attraction that are eligible for signing with generic symbols approved for use. Additionally, the Council would like the amendment to remove the timing restrictions as listed on page 3, Section (V), lines 12 through 17. The timing requirements could greatly limit the number of rural sites that would be eligible to participate in this program.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 1038 with amendments.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

House Bill 1038
Amendments

1. On Page 3, Line 16, Strike “AND”.
2. On Page 3, Line 17 after “YEAR”, add “AND” and on line 18 add “5. Except for certain Seasonal Agritourism attractions.”
3. On Page 4, Line 23, add “AND” and on Line 24 add “Agritourism Attractions”.