

February 7, 2023

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the
House Ways and Means Committee
6 Bladen Street, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for HB270

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

Last fall our property was the site of a filming location for the new television series ‘*Lioness*’ which will premiere on Paramount Plus in the near future. While the actual filming aspect of the process took five days, the capital invested into the property and local community far exceeded the week-long filming experience at our historic property. Fort Ritchie is a decommissioned Military Installation with an incredible history and approximately fifty buildings which are nearly a century old. After the property was selected for the film, Paramount almost immediately began investing funds into the site which had been left generally abandoned since its closure in 1998. Filming was done in three buildings, all of which received significant improvements on their interiors. For example, one building on site had not had power for nearly 25 years, the basement had significant debris, and the wooden floors on the first floor of the 5,000 square foot building were in rough shape. Paramount invested significant work into this building and used local labor which will now allow us to open a taproom there this year. Doors on many of our buildings were painted and hundreds of broken windows were replaced. This could not have been accomplished in such a rapid and effective manner without the presence of the production studio.

During the week of filming, the Fort absorbed 53 tractor trailers, dozens of military vehicles, and hundreds of extras who swarmed into Western Maryland from the quad-state area. The benefit to Cascade, the community surrounding the filming site, was immense to say the least. Cascade, Maryland, which currently hovers at around 11% poverty rate, was completely swarmed with business during the entire week. A café which had just opened the week before had a phenomenal opening week, the independently owned gas station had a huge spike in customers purchasing food and gasoline; Paramount bought every gallon of their propane for various uses throughout their sets. A custom metal manufacturer on site was contracted to create several pieces which enhanced the visual appeal of the site for the film and were later gifted to us. Rental and construction agencies were slammed with requests for manlifts, electrical equipment, painters, materials, and the like. Contractors were hired in droves to accommodate the rapid and quality pace of the production company’s expectations while area hotels were occupied with virtually hundreds of set designers, art departments, technical support, directors, and other staff.

Most notably, there was an exciting buzz of excitement in our region of the state surrounding the production of a movie which has not been present here since the filming of the 2003 Civil War film ‘*Gods and Generals*’. Without question, this film’s presence in Washington County generated immense value for our community and we have not yet seen the ripple effect of the show’s release. To put it in perspective, the fourth season of Paramount’s popular series

Yellowstone, the same network producing this show, has helped Montana generate \$85 million in revenue to the state. The rural area in which that show was filmed now sees crowds of tourists which has been a large boon for their tax base, businesses, and residents for years. The experience we were left with at Fort Ritchie was an incredibly positive one. The production company came to our property, constantly checked in to ensure our satisfaction, enhanced numerous locations on site, paid for their usage of the property, and bolstered many other local businesses in the process. The same things will be true of Maryland if the state continues to support the film industry's capacity to highlight the geographically diverse state in which we live. I'm requesting that you please pass HB270.

Sincerely,

John Krumpotich
Owner of Historic Fort Ritchie