



February 22, 2024

Maryland Senate
Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of HB 897 - Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force

Chairperson Barnes and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC). I am writing to you today to express MTC's support for Senate Bill 896. The Maryland Tourism Coalition is a trade organization with members representing all areas of tourism in the State of Maryland. Our mission is to support businesses and organizations that cater to the tourism industry through education, networking, and advocacy. As such, MTC asks the committee for a favorable report on this bill.

The Baltimore Convention Center is a cornerstone of the tourism industry in Baltimore City. Conventions, meetings, and events at the Convention Center drive businesses not only in the downtown business district but also the surrounding neighborhoods to downtown. Visitors to the convention center fill city hotels, restaurants, and retail stores. A thriving Convention Center leads to thriving businesses throughout the city.

However, the decline and lack of investment in the Convention Center over the years has led to a decline in business at the Convention Center which leads to a decline in the businesses that surround the Convention Center and the adjacent neighborhoods. Cities like Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Columbus Ohio have all invested in their convention spaces with modern upgrades and additional or new buildings. Events that had a long history in Baltimore have left for these cities with their bigger and better convention spaces. Failure to invest in our own Convention Center will lead to more lost business further straining the downtown Baltimore commercial areas.

The Baltimore Convention Center is an anchor to the recovery and revitalization of downtown Baltimore. We have seen recent investment in the CFG Arena, planned redevelopment of Harbor Place, and planned renovations at the Camden Yards Stadium Complex. All these development projects surround the Convention Center. If we fail to bring the Convention Center up to the



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level of these redevelopment projects, it threatens their ability to reach their full potential as well.

Investment in tourism infrastructure like the Convention Center are a long-term investment in Baltimore's future. Tourism is a core element of the State's economy and is a revenue generator for Maryland. We need to make sure that we regain the losses we have experienced from our competitors passing us by over the last few decades. For these reasons, the Maryland Tourism Coalition asks this committee for a favorable report for this legislation and forward it for a full vote within the House of Delegates of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Libber
Legislative Chair
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