

JOHNNY RAY SALLING
Legislative District 6
Baltimore County

Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Environment and Transportation Committee
Delegate Marc Korman
Delegate Regina T. Boyce
6 Bladen Street
House Office Building
Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am honored to bring before you a proposal seeking the codification of the name "Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore" in statute, a gesture that stands as a well-deserved recognition of a remarkable Maryland citizen. Helen Delich Bentley's journey began in Ruth, Nevada, in 1923, as the youngest of six children born to Serbian immigrant parents. Graduating with a journalism degree in 1944, she ventured to Maryland, where she swiftly made history as one of the first women to cover waterfront news for the Baltimore Sun, eventually becoming the Sun's maritime editor in 1949.

Bentley's expertise in the Port of Baltimore propelled her to host and produce the renowned WMAR-TV series "The Port That Built a City and State" from 1950 to 1965. Her newspaper column and television show became instrumental in raising awareness and advocating for increased public investments in Maryland's economic powerhouse. Recognizing her contributions, President Richard Nixon appointed Bentley as Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission in 1969, marking her as one of the first women to lead a federal regulatory agency.

Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1984, Bentley played a pivotal role in enacting legislation that resulted in a 50-foot channel for oceangoing ships, positioning Baltimore as the first East Coast port with such capabilities. Throughout her congressional tenure, she worked tirelessly to strengthen the U.S. maritime industry and foster harmony between labor and management, contributing to the efficiency and success of the Port of Baltimore.

Even after leaving public service and until her passing in 2016, Bentley remained dedicated to advancing the interests of the Port. Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. honored her legacy by naming the Port after her in 2006 through an Executive Order. Codifying the name in statute is a fitting and proper recognition of the "Godmother of the Port," ensuring her lifetime of dedicated service and remarkable contributions continue to inspire and resonate within Maryland's maritime history. We kindly request your favorable consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Johnny Ray Salling".

Senator Johnny Ray Salling