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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

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Testimony in Support with of  
House Bill 1032 – Transportation – Highways – Tourist Areas and Corridor Signage Program  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
February 23, 2024

**The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 1032 - 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; establishing an Eligibility Committee to review attraction applications; requiring the Administration to prepare a certain signage plan; etc.

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.

Marketing and a signage program are crucial for farmers in rural economies as they help to promote their products, increase visibility, and attract customers. By effectively marketing their goods and implementing a signage program, farmers can differentiate themselves from competitors, build brand recognition, and showcase the quality and uniqueness of their products. This not only leads to increased sales and revenue for the farmers but also helps to boost the local economy by drawing in tourists and supporting other local businesses. Furthermore, marketing and a signage program can create a sense of community and pride among farmers, fostering collaboration and partnerships that contribute to the overall growth and success of rural economies.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 1032.

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.

*“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”*