

Testimony to the Health and Government Operations Committee
Tuesday, January 24, 2024

Name: Elizabeth Shatto, Executive Director
Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA),
22 S. Market Street, Suite 215, Frederick, MD 21701
Issue: HB0133 Commission to Study African American Soldiers in Maryland
Position: FAV

House Bill 0133 proposes the establishment of a Commission to study African American Civil War Soldiers in Maryland. The organization I lead, the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, would be pleased to have a representative serve on the Commission. The Commission's work is relevant to our purpose – our mission statement makes clear that, with our partners, the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area preserves and promotes **diverse stories** in our counties (Carroll, Frederick and Washington).

The proposed Commission aligns with our strategic plan, which sets forth foundational Principals for Interpretation to guide our decisions regarding historical research and storytelling. Briefly, they are: (1) the Civil War is unfinished business, (2) Complexity is interesting, and (3) If we don't know the stories, we can't share them.

CARROLL COUNTY

Hampstead
Manchester
Mount Airy
New Windsor
Sykesville
Taneytown
Union Bridge
Westminster

We need to know the stories of African Americans in the US military during the Civil War-era more fully. Established in the spring of 1863, the United States Bureau of Colored Troops raised up from recruiting stations throughout the Northern and Border States, including one of significance in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, at Monocacy Junction, just south of Frederick. By the end of the American Civil War at least 540 men had been placed on the muster rolls from Frederick County and sent to enlist in a wide range of units. These included some of the most famous regiments, such as the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Infantry. Their contributions must be raised up, understood, and honored.

FREDERICK COUNTY

Brunswick
Burkittsville
Emmitsburg
Frederick
Middletown
Mount Airy
Myersville
New Market
Rosemont
Thurmont
Woodsboro

House Bill 133 anticipates a future tourism product – a memorial that will add to the range of visitor experiences that serve our residents and draw travelers to the State. Underlying the work of all certified heritage areas is tourism enhancement, development, and promotion. Investment in heritage tourism generates a return from which all Marylanders benefit. The most recent impact study found that the Maryland Heritage Areas Program contributes a combined total of \$2.4 billion to the Maryland economy, supports and sustains a combined total of 33,815 full-time and part-time jobs throughout the state, and generates \$319.8 million in state and local tax impact. Underlying the work of all certified heritage areas is tourism enhancement and development and promotion. Investment in heritage tourism generates a return from which all Marylanders benefit. The most recent impact study found that the Maryland Heritage Areas Program contributes a combined total of \$2.4 billion to the Maryland economy, supports and sustains a combined total of 33,815 full-time and part-time jobs throughout the state, and generates \$319.8 million in state and local tax impact.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Boonsboro
Clear Spring
Funkstown
Hagerstown
Hancock
Keedysville
Sharpsburg
Smithsburg
Williamsport

Products that benefit from the work of the proposed Commission will contribute to the growing economic impact of tourism and help establish Maryland as a place that is responsive to changes in demographics and emerging trends in the travel market. Besides a future memorial, Maryland's museums, historic sites, battlefields as well as numerous cultural and natural resources, will have a source where valid and vetted primary sources can be discovered and used to create compelling exhibits, arts programming, history-themed outdoor recreation and more. Educators will be equipped to tell Maryland's history more completely. Even small businesses, especially those housed in historic structures or operating in historic rural landscapes, may draw on the work of the Commission as they develop their brands and their consumer base.

22 S. Market Street
Frederick, MD 21701
info@heartofthecivilwar.org
heartofthecivilwar.org

We recognize that, as currently drafted, the timeline for a Commission report is ambitious. We would also encourage expansion of the scope to include both soldiers *and sailors* – but that would, of course, add to the timeline challenge. These concerns do not diminish our support for House Bill 0133. We welcome robust discussion and hope for your favorable consideration. Thank you.

