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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**HB 1032 Testimony – Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program**  
**March 27, 2024**  
**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on HB 1032, which codifies and reinvigorates the Maryland Tourist Area and Corridor (TAC) Signage Program operated by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and the Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce).

Attraction signs are necessary to direct visitors to cultural and recreational activities. TAC Signing is a system of supplemental guide signs which directs drivers to eligible individual attractions by first directing them to groups of attractions. These attractions are grouped into geographical areas and sub-areas. Mainline signs on expressways or major highways direct drivers to the geographical area. Then ramp and conventional road area signs lead drivers to the corridor from which all individual attractions are located. Each individual attraction has a trailblazing sign at the turn for each location.

To be eligible for TAC signing, attractions must meet a set of requirements and are subject to space availability, as determined by SHA regulations and requirements. Typically, an eligible attraction must primarily provide recreational, historical, cultural, or leisure activities to the public and meet or adhere to a long list of criteria. HB 1038 would codify TAC, as it previously operated without funding or statutory authority. The bill would keep most of the program the same with some minor updates and additions. For example, it allows for additional attractions deemed important to the state or local economy to be eligible even if they do not meet all the existing requirements.

It also adds provides flexibility to Commerce to add additional eligible attractions for signing with a generic symbol or simply using the words. This would allow for breweries and distilleries to be eligible for the program where they had previously been excluded. Signs are crucial for businesses to attract new customers and grow their business overall. I consider these signs a crucial piece of the “last mile” marketing the state provides to support our businesses.

I worked closely with MDOT representatives to ensure we develop a coherent, effective, and equitable process to revitalize and expand the TAC program. The bill stipulates that MDOT and Commerce must work together to develop standards and procedures for determining eligibility for area businesses. Commerce will then develop a signage plan with any interested business based on

those standards and submit it to MDOT for review and approval. MDOT will ensure the signage plan complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations as well as right-of-way regulations.

Lastly, under this bill each applicant who is approved for a sign under the TAC Program will pay the entire cost of manufacturing and installation of the sign as well as an annual administrative fee once the sign is installed. This makes the program effectively budget neutral while still providing important attractions and local businesses with a significantly reduced cost means of advertising on state roadways.

The bill is supported by Cultivate & Craft, tourism Agencies, businesses, and chambers of commerce across Maryland. **The House of Delegates voted unanimously for HB 1032. Thank you for your consideration and I ask for a favorable report on HB 1032.**