



Veronica Gallardo, Principle
Public History Practitioner
Serving the DMV area!

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Veronica Gallardo

Organization: Small Museums But Mighty

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: February 27, 2025

The Small Museums But Mighty is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative HB1327 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

"Small Museums but Mighty" has greatly benefited from this program, allowing us to sustain a variety of museum initiatives that offer more personal experiences for Marylanders and promote deeper engagement. By personalizing tours and encouraging meaningful dialogue with our guests, we can focus on niche topics and local history, showcasing unique artifacts and stories that larger institutions might overlook. The Maryland Heritage Areas program supports small museums, which often act as community hubs, fostering local involvement and cultural pride. This initiative enables many small museums to prioritize the promotion of local artists, cultures, and histories, providing a platform for new voices and regional narratives. Furthermore, the Maryland Heritage Areas program helps small museums create enriching experiences that Marylanders can take pride in. It empowers these institutions to serve as stewards of our local environment and culture, building strong community support and fostering a sense of connection and belonging.

So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state,

and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

Small museums in Maryland can be found in vibrant urban centers as well as serene rural areas, playing a crucial role in the tapestry of our communities by providing essential links to culture and heritage. These institutions are a source of pride and deserve your support!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Veronica Gallardo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "G".

Veronica Gallardo

President

Small Museums But Mighty!