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To: Members of the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

RE: SB 0980

February 28, 2025

I write to express my support for Senate Bill 0980, which would lift the spending cap on Maryland Heritage Area Authority grants to a maximum of \$12 million. My understanding is that Maryland law now allows a maximum of \$6 million to be appropriated to MHAA, of which \$5.1 is distributed as grants, and that these funds come from property transfer taxes rather than from the general fund.

Given our region's attraction as a venue for "history tourism," I believe that lifting this cap to the maximum of \$12 million, as proposed in SB 0980, will enable the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation (on whose board I serve) and similar organizations to further develop programming that appeals to our historically minded visitors, who will in turn support small businesses in our local communities. Maryland has a rich history dating both to the colonial era, with sites such as Fort Frederick and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; and the Civil War era, with sites such as Antietam National Battlefield.

I am the author of "Maryland Voices of the Civil War" and "Travels Through American History in the Mid-Atlantic: A Guide for All Ages," both published by Johns Hopkins University Press. In my travel and research for these works, I have seen firsthand the appeal of our state's historic sites—one reason why I love living in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Charles W. Mitchell