

Name: Elizabeth Scott Shatto, Executive Director



Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date:

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

House Environment and Transportation, March 5, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB0980/HB1327. The time is right to establish the possibility of a greater share of Program Open Space funds to support the important investment made by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in our revenue-producing place-based assets.

Together, Maryland's 13 heritage areas bring about economic benefit to the tune: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

Potentially, SB980 will double those impact numbers. MHAA grants support heritage tourism focused projects, but current law caps the budget at \$6 million, \$5.1 of which goes to our partners for grants. Each year, well-scoring, worthy projects go unfunded. On average there's an \$8 million funding gap and sometimes it is much more.

In our heritage area, 34 projects have been identified in Intent to Apply submissions for FY26, including the following that promise great ROI:

- \$100,000 request from AARCH (African American Culture and Heritage Society) - for the final work necessary to prepare the new Heritage Center for opening - serving our residents and a growing African American travel market.
- \$100,000 request from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, for an updated exhibition experience including more inclusive interpretation throughout - a major overhaul of a visitor experience that promises huge heritage tourism impact.
- \$50,000 request from the City of Frederick Sites of Enslavement project - a multi-phase project, this phase focusing on wayside interpretation and tour development.
- \$100,000 request for the final phase of American Hall restoration (African American resource, strong Civil War connections, will include a visitor experience to boost heritage tourism).
- \$100,000 request for the Doleman Black Heritage Museum building project.
- \$25,000 request from the City of Hagerstown for a Hager House visitor orientation film - in time for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Washington County and the nation.

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Manchester  
Mount Airy  
New Windsor  
Sykesville  
Taneytown  
Union Bridge  
Westminster

### FREDERICK COUNTY

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

### WASHINGTON COUNTY

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Hagerstown  
Hancock  
Keedysville  
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Williamsport

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SB980 does not carry a spending mandate but it would allow for future MHAA appropriations of up to \$12 million. Passing the law now means that when it makes fiscal sense for the state to take more advantage of the power of Maryland Heritage Areas to generate more tourism spending, create and sustain more jobs, and increase local and state tax bases, we will be poised and ready. This is forward thinking at a time when it is most needed.

For the sake of all Marylanders, we hope SB0980/HB1327 will succeed.