



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Name: Tom Gilmore, Chief Land Preservation Officer

Organization: American Battlefield Trust

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: 2/28/2025

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

House Environment and Transportation, March 5, 2025

I am writing in support of SB0980/HB1327, legislation that will open the possibility of a greater share of the restricted Program Open Space fund for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). The statute will allow for up to \$12 million to be appropriated for MHAA. Most of the MHAA budget is awarded in grants to nonprofits and government units, for projects that contribute to place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a staff member of the American Battlefield Trust, my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that the American Battlefield Trust, with MHAA grant support, has contributed to statewide heritage area program impact: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

With help from the MHAA, the American Battlefield Trust has been able to preserve properties on the Antietam battlefield in Washington County, Maryland. Without the support of MHAA, these properties may not have been preserved.

When funded under the current statute, up to \$6 million may be budgeted annually for MHAA, with \$5.1 million available for grants. That's far too little; many worthy projects are unfunded, which means loss of ROI for local communities and the state. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, and the general public who visit protected battlefields, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

*Tom Gilmore*