



February 28, 2025

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE (Raise the cap)

Name: Shauntee Daniels

Organization: Baltimore National Heritage Area

Issue: SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Every cent of the \$6 million budgeted for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) is needed and we ask for your support to keep the funds, in their entirety, within the MHAA.

MHAA is funded with restricted Program Open Space funds. MHAA is distinct from the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) which is funded through the general fund.

BNHA generates \$753.7 million annually, primarily through heritage tourism, which accounts for \$749.7 million of the total impact. This robust economic activity is fueled by visitors to iconic sites like Fort McHenry, the B & O Railroad, Edgar Allan Poe Museum, and the National Aquarium and many other heritage attractions.

In Baltimore we have been investing state, local, federal, and private dollars into the Baltimore National Heritage Area since 2000. Maryland investments take time and when they are made over a period of years, is benefit the communities of the in which we serve. With these investments we have assisted dozens upon dozens of historic sites, attractions, natural resources, and cultural organizations in becoming more visitor-ready and visitor-friendly. And **the timing could not be more critical** as we continue these investments. As many look at Baltimore with fear and trepidation, cancelling visits, school tours, conferences, etc it is more important than ever that we make these investments so that visitors and residents have the best experiences possible. We are also, in a difficult position because we tell stories that are diverse, equity and inclusion is under attack in storytelling.

- With your support we can potentially fund up to more distinct capital and non-capital projects throughout the heritage area this year. If awarded, these projects supports **Job Creation:** BNHA supports **6,422 jobs**, with 6,408 stemming from heritage tourism activities and an additional 14 from the organization's operations and grant making.
- **Tax Revenue:** BNHA contributes **\$60.9 million** annually in state and local tax revenue, supporting critical public services and infrastructure.



"Sankofa ~ Go back and fetch it. We must look back to the past so that we can understand how we became what we are and move forward to a better future."



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• **Leverage of Federal Funds:** Every dollar of federal investment in BNHA is amplified by matching local and private funding, creating a multiplier effect that sustains historic preservation projects, community development, and tourism initiatives.

Last, but not least, there should be additional funding to support Heritage Area Management for operations. The Heritage Areas budget remains at \$100,000 since the program began, despite rising expenses each year.

Thank you again for your on-going support. We appreciate all that you do and we wish you the best of luck during the FY26 legislative session

Respectfully,
Shauntee

Shauntee Daniels, Executive Director
Baltimore National Heritage Area



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