



THE COMMISSIONERS OF THURMONT

615 East Main Street
11 Water Street
P.O. Box 17
Thurmont, Maryland 21788
301-271-7313
Fax: 301-271-2155

Name: Town of Thurmont
Organization: Department of Economic & Community Development
Issue: SB0980/HB1327
Position: Favorable
Date: February 21, 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 and supporter of MHAA of the town of Thurmont, 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 town of Thurmont, with MHAA grant support, has contributed to the statewide heritage area program with an impact: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

MHAA has been very supportive of the town of Thurmont over the last decade and have assisted us in several projects such as beautiful welcome signs entering the gateways of Thurmont to make our residents proud and our visitors welcome. Thurmont has also been awarded funds for our wayfaring signs that direct folks around town to historical places, educational and event venues. This support has been greatly appreciated because Thurmont is a small rural municipality that is sometimes forgotten in the big picture. We support MHAA and their mission to keep the authentic heritage of Maryland alive for generations to come. Our town is becoming a destination, and these funds have made it possible to contribute more aesthetically pleasing surroundings to our residents and visitors alike.

For FY26, we are requesting MHAA grant support for continuation of a loop trail from Thurmont Community Park to Catoclin Mountain Park.

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, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

Best,
Vickie Grinder

Town of Thurmont
Economic and Community Development Manager