



February 28, 2025

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB980 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of Visit Frederick (the Tourism Council of Frederick County), the designated and official destination marketing organization for Frederick County, MD, please accept this letter of support for SB980 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants.

This 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 preservation and place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a member of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA) Board of Directors, I am proud of HCWHA contributions 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.

For FY26, HCWHA has received Intent to Apply notices from 34 nonprofits and government entities that will seek more than \$1.6 million in MHAA project grant awards. The projects will take place in Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. We count our work to facilitate MHAA grants and assist grant applicants to present competitive applications, as one of the organization's highest, and most rewarding, duties. Yet, 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.

We encourage everyone on the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to support SB980. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Ziedelis". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dave Ziedelis
Executive Director