

Template for Partner written testimony:

Name: Renate Gravers, Director

Organization: The Latvian Museum

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: February 24, 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 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 partner of the Heritage Montgomery Heritage Area (HM), I am proud of HM's contributions to the statewide heritage area program's impact: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, and \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

The entire community of The Latvian Museum is very grateful to the assistance we were granted. Our mission of acquainting the world with the history and culture of Latvia, a small but strategically located country in northern Europe. The history of Latvia is a reminder of the tragedies that can ensue if we do not learn from past mistakes. Your help in our developing a vibrant and interesting museum for all to see is very important to all nationalities and all countries.

I urge you to support SB0980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

Thank you for your steadfast support of Maryland's Heritage Areas. For the sake of all Marylanders, please give SB0980/HB1327 your favorable vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Renate Gravers, Director

The Latvian Museum