



DestinationSouthernMaryland.com
301.274.4083

Southern Maryland National Heritage Area
P. O. Box 745 | Hughesville, MD 20637

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Lucille W. Walker, Executive Director

Organization: Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: February 28, 2025

The Southern Maryland National Heritage Area is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative SB0980 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

These are difficult times for our state, and the Maryland Heritage Area program is part of the solution.

With community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies, this program has a proven record of return on investment that is stunning: \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

The Southern Maryland National Heritage Area is both a state and national heritage area, covering Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and southern Prince George's counties. Maryland is only one of two states in the entire nation with a state-based heritage area program. Maryland has recognized the profound economic and cultural value of heritage areas, both to bringing visitors/tourists to the state and to enhancing our communities for residents. This shows how much Maryland values its heritage!

Right now, there is a \$6 million funding gap each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is also the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism in Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

This legislation queues up Maryland for future growth! Please support SB0980. Please invest in Maryland's heritage. Please invest in Maryland's future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucille W. Walker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.



Piscataway Conoy Tribe
Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council
The Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe of Maryland Inc.
P.O. Box 638
Bryans Road, Maryland 20616
piscatawayconoycouncil@gmail.com

February 26, 2025

Name: Francis Gray, Chairman

Organization: Piscataway Conoy Tribe (Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe of Maryland Inc.)

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

The Piscataway Conoy Tribe is in FULL SUPPORT of the Legislative Initiative SB0980 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas Program to receive up to \$12 million annually, increasing the current cap from \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the State's Transfer Tax, when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area Program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

The Piscataway Conoy tribe has benefited from this program by grants supporting:

- The Piscataway Conoy Indigenous Peoples Festival 2024
- The Piscataway Conoy Museum and Cultural Center, supporting the only Indigenous cultural facility in Southern Maryland
- The Piscataway Conoy Tribe Static display at the Maryland Visitor Center in Newburg Maryland

So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns,

and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas Program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

In addition, this program has and will serve to strengthen and preserve Maryland's indigenous communities throughout Southern Maryland. In regard to the Piscataway Conoy, we have the opportunity to invert the narrative of Maryland's colonial story and to tell our story through the eyes of the Piscataway—to speak of our past, purpose, and the resilience of a people who have had to continuously overcome challenges throughout many years, resulting in changes that dramatically affected the lifeways of our people. The designation of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area has created a unique opportunity for the tribal community to put into motion an extremely important and long overdue effort to record, document, protect, and raise awareness about our history from a cultural perspective that will convey the proud heritage of our Piscataway people. We hope this program can continue to support our efforts into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Francis Gray".

Francis Gray
Piscataway Conoy Tribal Chairman



St. Mary's County Museum Division

Department of Recreation & Parks

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: **Karen Stone, Division Manager**

Organization: **St. Mary's County Museum Division**

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: **February 27, 2025**

The St. Mary's County Museum Division is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative HB1327 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

The St. Mary's County Museum Division has significantly benefited from its participation in the Maryland Heritage Area program. Through collaborative partnerships and access to resources facilitated by the program, the Division has been able to enhance its interpretive programming, expand preservation efforts at historic sites and increase public awareness of Southern Maryland's rich cultural heritage when funding obstacles would have otherwise meant these important projects could not proceed. Specifically, the heritage area designation has provided opportunities for grant funding, technical assistance and collaborative marketing initiatives, all of which have strengthened the Division's ability to fulfill its mission of preserving and interpreting the history of St. Mary's County for residents and visitors alike.

So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions.

**St. Clement's Island
Museum**
**Piney Point Lighthouse
Museum &
Historic Park**
**Drayden
African American
Schoolhouse**
**The Old Jail Museum &
Leonardtown Visitor
Center**

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Michael R. Alderson, Jr.
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Katherine Ross

Raymond E. Bivens
Department Director

Karen E. Stone
Division Manager

The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

Thank you for your recognition and consideration of this significant program!

Respectfully submitted,



Karen E. Stone
Museum Division Manager
St. Mary's County, MD



The African American Heritage Society of Charles County, Inc.

P.O. Box 2250

La Plata, Maryland 20646

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Dorothea Smith, President

Organization: African American Heritage Society of Charles County

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: February 27, 2025

The African American Heritage Society is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative *SB0980* which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

Our heritage area, the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, is vital to the work we do. It is important to have a resource for grants to assist with the vital work of communicating authentic stories and histories, bringing visitors to the area, and enhancing the region for residents. At the African American Heritage House, we tell the true history of African American experiences in Southern Maryland. Just as important as grant funding is the advocacy and partnership building that this heritage area brings to our region and Maryland.

So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism

to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

The African American Heritage Society of Charles County asks for your FULL SUPPORT for SB0980.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothea H. Smith

Julia A. King
47520 Dutchman's Drive
P.O. Box 213
St. Mary's City, Md. 20686

February 24, 2025

Re: SB0980 (Maryland Heritage Areas Authority-Funding and Grants)

Dear Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee, Maryland Senate:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to you in **full support** of the legislative initiative **SB0980** (Maryland Heritage Areas Authority-Funding and Grants) which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Areas program is a remarkable and extremely successful program, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue are generated.

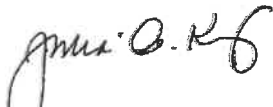
As an employee of St. Mary's College of Maryland, a resident of southern Maryland, and a member of the Interim Board of Directors of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, I have seen up close the real world benefits of this program. Current funding has supported projects that contribute not only to our community but our sense of who we are as individuals and as citizens of this great state.

And yet, many worthy projects go unfunded because resources are limited. So many, in fact, that there is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised since the creation of MHAA in 1996—fully 30 years!—and 1996 dollars don't go nearly as far as 2025 dollars (\$1 then equals \$2.01 today according to Bureau of Labor statistics).

With your support, this future funding will allow grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter and for the work you do on behalf of Maryland citizens.

Sincerely,



Julia A. King, Ph.D.
George B. and Willma Reeves Endowed Chair in the Liberal Arts and
Professor of Anthropology

FARM HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

PO Box 226

Benedict, Maryland 20612

“Reconnecting the people to the land through preservation, cultivation, and education.”

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

Organization: Farm Heritage Conservancy

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

27 February 2025

The Farm Heritage Conservancy, a 501c3, is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative SB0980 to allow the lifting of the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state’s transfer tax, when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

The Conservancy’s mission is, “Reconnecting people to the land through preservation, cultivation, and education.” The Conservancy has benefited from this program by receiving grants, mini-grants, and support for important education initiatives and tourism events. These events have bolstered awareness and community involvement in their county (Charles) and neighborhood as well as bringing in tourism dollars that may have been spent elsewhere.

There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

We strongly ask that you support SB0980.

Respectfully submitted,

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr. //signed virtually//

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

Board Chair, Farm Heritage Conservancy, Inc.

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Nancy L. Easterling
Organization: Historic Sotterley
Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**
Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: February 27, 2025

Historic Sotterley, Inc. is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative HB1327 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not guarantee funding, of course, but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, if and when it should become available.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, with a \$7 return for every \$1 of state funding! Also, thousands of jobs are supported, and millions in state and local tax revenue is generated.

Historic Sotterley has benefited from this program over the years in so many ways, and the many grant projects that it has funded were often projects that simply would not have been possible otherwise. From living histories to our Slave Dwelling Exhibit, signage, brochures, critical preservation and restoration of our historic structures and more, every project funded by these grants has helped to advance our mission and serve our community.

So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. The Maryland Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county in the state, and the City of Baltimore. This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

The Maryland Heritage Areas program has been a rare and invaluable source of grant funding and support of the keepers of Maryland's history. An investment in this program is truly an investment in our State's heritage and culture, and I ask that you offer your full support to lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding.

Respectfully submitted,



Nancy L. Easterling
Executive Director

Historic Sotterley Inc's Mission: Preserve our historic structures and natural environment and use the powerful stories of our land, lives, and labor to bring American history to life while serving as an educational and cultural resource.



Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

Memo

To: Shaina A. Hernandez, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor's Office

From: Rebecca L. Flora, Chair, Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA)

CC: Members of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority; Brad Fallon, Deputy Legislative Officer, Governor's Office; Ariane Hofstedt, Administrator, Maryland Heritage Areas Program

Date: February 19, 2025

Re: Notice of MHAA Special Meeting on February 13, 2025 and Approved Motion

A special meeting of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority was held on February 13, 2025, to discuss 2025 legislation that could potentially impact the work of MHAA, specifically SB0980 and HB1327 concerning Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants. The meeting, which was scheduled at the request of members, resulted in a motion to notify Governor Moore of MHAA's general desire for increased funding to support the work of the Authority. This memo serves as that notification and includes a brief summary of the proceedings, the motion, and some historical context.

As Chair of the Authority, I began the meeting by informing members that MHAA, as an "independent unit of government in the Executive Branch of government that operates in the Department of Planning," is subject to the requirement that it coordinate with the Governor's Office on legislative matters. I also noted that the same requirement to consult with the Governor on legislative matters applies to the Maryland Department of Planning, as well as all other cabinet agencies, including those that have representation on MHAA. MHAA did not take an official position (support or opposed) on SB0980 and HB1327, but instead stated a desire to share with Governor Moore its view that increased funding would have a positive impact on the work of the Authority.

To this end, the members of MHAA passed the following motion:

"The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) should notify the Governor's Office in writing that MHAA members believe an increase in funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, to include administering grants to organizations and agencies located within certified local heritage areas, would be beneficial to the overall work of the Authority and

encourages the Moore-Miller Administration to support an increase of Program Open Space funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority for this purpose.”

The following members voted in favor of the motion:

- Elizabeth Hughes, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Natalie Chabot, Maryland Greenways Commission representative
- Melissa Archer, representing MD Department of Housing & Community Development Secretary Jake Day and Vice Chair to MHAA
- Mary Anne Harms, Speaker of the House representative
- Robert D. Campbell, Governor’s Appointee for Historic Preservation
- Nicholas Redding, President of the Senate representative
- Dennis Doster, Governor’s Appointee for Heritage Tourism
- Pete Leshner, Maryland Association of Counties representative
- Mayor Nathan Brown, Maryland Municipal League representative

The following members abstained:

- Secretary Rebecca M. Flora, MD Department of Planning and serving as the Chair for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
- Hilary Bell, representing MD Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz

No members opposed the motion.

The following MHAA members were absent:

- Geoffrey Newman, representing Maryland Department of Higher Education Secretary Sanjay Rai
- Sandy Turner, Maryland Tourism Development Board representative
- Julie Schablitsky, representing MD Department of Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld
- Jonathan Hughes, Speaker of the House representative
- Peter Ramsey, representing MD State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury (non-voting)
- Rowland Agbede, representing MD Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks (non-voting)

The Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition, composed of heritage area directors from all 13 certified heritage areas, is the group that has historically advocated for increased funding to

MHAA. Their advocacy efforts successfully doubled the funding to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in FY19 when it was raised from \$3 million to \$6 million. MHAA did not take a position on the FY19 bills, but members of MHAA testified as individuals of the public not representing MHAA. The Coalition is once again advocating for the funds to MHAA to be doubled as outlined, among other provisions, in SB0980 and HB1327. Similar to last time, MHAA members have been informed that they are able to testify for these bills during the 2025 legislative session as individuals, not representing MHAA, if they so choose.



SUPPORT SB0980 & HB1327

Unlock Maryland's Potential: Lift the Cap on Heritage Area Funding

SB0980 & HB1327 Would Lift the Funding Cap On Maryland's Heritage Areas

Proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas Program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation **does not guarantee funding** but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, should it become available.

A Smart Investment with Big Returns

Maryland's 13 Heritage Areas fuel our economy, attracting visitors whose dollars support jobs, businesses, and tax growth in communities across our state.



\$2.4 billion pumped into Maryland's economy annually



\$319.8 million in state and local tax revenue



40,000 jobs supported, from museum staff to trail builders to festival organizers

Right now, this vital program is running on fumes.

Funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Program is currently capped at \$6 million annually.



Over the last three years, an \$8 million gap has stalled high-impact projects.



Capital, Management, and Project grants to heritage areas haven't increased in 30 years —worth just 62 cents on the dollar today.



Meanwhile, the workload has tripled as demand for heritage tourism grows.

With additional investment, we can:



Fully fund community-driven projects that grow local economies (62% of money spent in a community stays in the community).



Prepare to celebrate America's 250th (2026) and Maryland's 400th (2034) anniversaries.



Ensure every voice is heard and every story is told—from the mountains of Western Maryland to the shores of the Chesapeake.

Maryland has 13 certified Heritage Areas, **covering a portion of every county in the state** and the City of Baltimore. Created in 1996, the Heritage Areas Program is one of the primary tools used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland.

INVEST IN MARYLAND'S HERITAGE. INVEST IN MARYLAND'S FUTURE.