

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
Michael Freiman
Morgan Stanley

Name: Micheal Freiman, Foundation President

Organization: Field of Firsts Foundation, Inc.

VICE PRESIDENT

Issue: **SUPPORT HB1327 (SB0980)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

SECRETARY
Tyler Cohen
Technology Security
Associates, Inc.

Date: February 27, 2025

TREASURER
Michael Twigg
Nest-Twigg, LLC

On behalf of The Field of Firsts Foundation, 501 (c)(3), I wanted to express my 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.

David Gavin
Attorney

Arthur Johnson
Destiny Aviation
Services, LLC

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.

Lucia Mencia

Erin Miller
Attorney

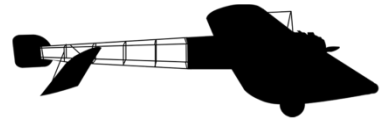
The Field of Firsts Foundation supports the exhibition and programming for the College Park Aviation Museum. The College Park Aviation Museum is dedicated to preserving, interpreting and promoting the rich history of College Park Airport, the world’s oldest continuously operating airport, in operation since 1909. The Field of Firsts Foundation received \$50,000 in matched funding from Prince George’s Heritage Area, Anacostia Trails, MHAA in July 2025. This grant is a major source of funding for the completion of the museum’s groundbreaking *Columbia Air Center-Determined to Fly* exhibition. This exhibit shares the overlooked history of the nation’s first licensed Black-owned and operated airport, which operated from 1940-1962 in Croom, Prince George’s County, MD. The grant funds will be used to develop the exhibit’s interactive digital elements, such as projected video and holograms. Developing engaging exhibits allows the museum to engage its audiences meaningfully, especially youth audiences, and supports the museum’s mission of preserving and promoting Maryland’s unique history.

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.





Field of Firsts
FOUNDATION, INC.



My organization knows how scarce opportunities for financial support are and have greatly benefited from being a recipient of the MHAA grant program. The Museum and Foundation serve the diverse families and local history enthusiasts of Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. Our community cherishes the opportunities and programs our low-cost museum offers. The 27,000 sq ft museum serves 35,000-45,000 visitors annually with only 5 full-time staff and 5-10 part-time staff. MHAA grants provide vital funding to maintain staff and effectively preserve and promote history, especially during time of economic instability.

By investing in MHAA, the State of Maryland allows MHAA's grantees to grow into more effective proponents of Maryland history and culture.

It is my hope that you will include the vital funding for this ambitious, yet sorely needed, grantmaking initiative in the FY2026 budget—as well as support any efforts to ensure it will continue in FY2027 and beyond.

Respectfully submitted

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