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PASSAGES
OF THE
WESTERN POTOMAC
HERITAGE AREA



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Deidra Ritchie
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Deidra Ritchie, Executive Director

Canal Place Preservation & Development Authority, Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: February 27, 2025

The [organization] 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 Passages of the Western Potomac has benefited from this program by supporting such impactful projects as the Footer's Dye Building that was a \$9 Million restoration project that demonstrates the county's industrial history. The building now provides an economic impact to the area through retail shopping spaces and 24 new apartments in the downtown area. Projects like this restore and preserve the local history of the area that otherwise would be lost. The Heritage Program has provided an economic impact on Allegany County of more than \$19 Million annually in the smallest Heritage Area in MD. These funds are vital to the economic development and sustainability of the area.

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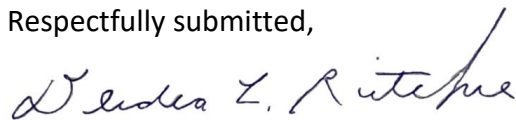
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So why this legislation? There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most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

Respectfully submitted,



Deidra Ritchie
Executive Director
Canal Place Preservation & Development Authority
Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area