

# SERENITY FARM, INC.

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## TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: A. Theresa Robinson

Organization: Serenity Farm, Inc.

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

**Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants**

27 February 2025

Serenity Farm, Inc. of Benedict, Charles County, 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.

Serenity Farm is a mid-size family farm lying along the Patuxent River in Benedict. For over 8 generations we have farmed and changed our farming practices with the times. Agritourism has become one of our main income sources and the Maryland Heritage Areas programs and work support this. Events they have funded have bolstered awareness and community involvement in our 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,

*Adina Theresa Robinson //signed virtually//*

Adina Theresa Robinson, President  
Serenity Farm, Inc.