

Name: Sarah L. Rogers, Executive Director

Organization: Heritage Montgomery

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date:

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

Of specific note are the following efforts that would not have been possible without Heritage Area funds:

- HM has long been an innovator in prioritizing preservation of underserved community stories, structures, and archives. Heritage Area funding provided support for projects such as Scotland AME Zion Church, Warren Historic Site, Sugarland/St. Paul Church, Sandy Spring Oddfellows Hall, and Pleasant View ME Church – all African American heritage sites which likely would have been lost without HM funding.
- MHAA management grants provide for HM staff to offer leadership to partner organizations assisting them with project management, technical support, national museum and safety guidelines, grant writing, and fundraising to leverage grant funds – all vital services to largely volunteer run organizations.
- HM is leading the Montgomery County and State 250th commemoration planning ensuring an inclusive elevation of all county history – Native American, African American, immigrant, women and minorities

For FY26, HM has received Intent to Apply notices from 17 nonprofits and government entities that will seek more than \$1 million in MHAA project grant awards. The projects will take place in Montgomery County, Maryland. We count our work to facilitate MHAA grants and assist grant applicants to present competitive applications, as one of our organizations highest, and most rewarding, duties. Yet, when funded under the current statute, up to \$6 million may be budgeted annually for MHAA, with \$5.1 million available for grants. That's far too little; many worthy projects are unfunded, which means loss of ROI for local communities and the state.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah L. Roger", followed by a long horizontal line that ends in a small dot.

Sarah L. Roger
Executive Director
Heritage Montgomery