

**PHG Senate Testimony-SB0980.pdf**

Uploaded by: Aaron Shapiro

Position: FAV



P. O. Box 96, Ellicott City, Maryland 21041 | [info@patapsco.org](mailto:info@patapsco.org) | [www.patapsco.org](http://www.patapsco.org)

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Aaron Shapiro

WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Aaron Shapiro  
Organization: Patapsco Heritage Greenway  
Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**  
**Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants**

February 28, 2025

Patapsco Heritage Greenway supports the underlying principle in SB0980 to 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.

Patapsco Heritage Greenway is proud to serve as the certified heritage area management entity for the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area in Howard and Baltimore County. Our mission is to preserve, protect, interpret and restore the environment, history and culture of the Patapsco River Valley for all. Working with our partners, we have brought increased vitality to heritage tourism activities, enhancing the visitor experience and driving interest in local businesses. In the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area, grants, technical assistance, and marketing have supported projects from, among others, Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park, Howard County Tourism Council (Visit Howard County), Catonsville Rails to Trails, Howard County Conservancy, Community College of Baltimore County, and the Ellicott City Historic District Partnership as well as our local historical societies and in support of our multi-use trails.

The Maryland Heritage Area program supports community driven projects that grow local economies statewide. The return on investment is substantial, with \$7 for every \$1 of state funding. The program supports thousands of jobs and generates millions in state and local tax revenue. Lifting the cap offers the potential for grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties and communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions. 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. Patapsco Heritage Greenway supports lifting the cap, noting that future additional funding would generate substantial economic return while helping meet the needs of our nonprofit and local government partners.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Shapiro, PhD  
Executive Director

*PATAPSCO HERITAGE GREENWAY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to preserve, protect, interpret, & restore the environment, history, and culture of the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area.*

# **Allison Weiss - Sandy Spring Museum - in support o**

Uploaded by: Allison Weiss

Position: FAV

Name: Allison Weiss

Organization: Sandy Spring Museum

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: February 26, 2025

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

Grants from MHAA has allowed Sandy Spring Museum to take on projects it otherwise would have not been able to fund. Such projects include improving access to Black history in the museum's archives, constructing an addition to the museum that will provide free rehearsal space to artists (many of whom are members of underserved communities), and creating new programs for the enjoyment of regional tourists.

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,

Allison Weiss  
Executive Director

# **Letter of Support SB980.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amanda Brooks

Position: FAV



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

February 24, 2025

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **Support for Senate Bill 980-Natural Resources-Maryland Heritage Areas Authority-Funding and Grants**

Dear Senator Guzzone:

The Board of County Commissioners of Washington County (the “Board”) unanimously support the passage of SB 980. The County’s support is based on two factors. First, the Bill will allow the State to pay for a larger percentage of natural resource investment projects. This will in turn encourage larger projects and more substantial investment to occur, which will lead to improved returns and ultimately increase Maryland’s effective use of natural resources. Second, this Bill will have a minimal impact on the State’s finances. In Maryland, funding for natural resource development grants comes from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund. These funds are already allocated under existing Maryland Law and cannot be used for other purposes.

Washington County is home to numerous State and Federal parks including sites, like the Antietam Battlefield, that are critically important to the history of Maryland and of the United States generally. These parks and historical sites already represent a major source of income for Washington County and, by extension, the State of Maryland. This Bill will support the development of larger projects that will enhance this already incredibly valuable resource.

For the reasons stated above, we ask that you support the passage of SB 980.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY:

  
John F. Barr, President

# **testimony to Lift the Cap.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ann Aldrich

Position: FAV

## **WCHT testimony to Lift the Cap**

Name: Ann Aldrich, Secretary

Organization: Washington County Historical Trust, Inc.

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: February 28, 2025

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 place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a Board member, of Washington County Historical Trust, Inc (WCHT), my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that WCHT, with MHAA grant support, has contributed to the 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.

MHAA has been a keystone funder for WCHT in our efforts to restore the 1797 Saylor House in Kiwanis Park, Hagerstown. The Saylor House serves as a 3-season classroom on the banks of the Antietam and approximately ½ way down the Antietam Water Trail. The Park has a public boat ramp to the Antietam below the house. The house serves as a fantastic interpretive site for pre-history to today representing prehistoric archaeological findings, historic settlement patterns, historic buildings and trades, the Antietam Canal, early fish conservation legislation, a civil war skirmish along the Gettysburg retreat route, through today's development along the Eastern Blvd corridor. MHAA has funded matching grants in FY22 (\$30,849) & FY25 (\$8,667) which WCHT has leveraged more than 4-times over with funds from other foundations, individual donors and volunteers to restore the kitchen wing as an accessible meeting and classroom; rebuilt chimneys; completed structural repairs; repaired floors and replaced the buildings roof. A unique part of our restoration process is incorporating archaeological workshops to document artifacts found in and around the house and historic building skills workshops in which participants learned the proper techniques to repair the lime mortar pointing, exterior woodwork, repairing and re-



plastering with lime plaster and how to preserve, repair and restore wooden windows. These funds were the game changer to restore this house abandoned in 1965 and given to the City of Hagerstown in 2013. The early unaltered stone house would have been demolished without this support. The building is now an asset in the historic tourism fabric of Washington County.

For FY26, we are requesting MHAA grant support for a \$25,000 matching grant to complete the restoration of the interior of the house in order to open the space to celebrate America's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Completing the house restoration will add more meeting and display space to the already available kitchen wing and adding a key City Landmark to the historic tourism map.

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. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

# **Support for SB0980 HB1327 to Increase MHAA Funding**

Uploaded by: Ashley Collier

Position: FAV

LARRY HUSHOUR  
Mayor



*Council Members*  
LYNNE P. GALLETTI *Secretary*

KARL L. MUNDER  
JASON P. EVANS

STEPHEN L. DOMOTOR

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TIM J. WASHABAUGH  
*Council President*

**Subject: Support for SB0980/HB1327 to Increase MHAA Funding**

Dear Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and House Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Mount Airy to express strong support for SB0980/HB1327, legislation that will open the possibility of allocating a greater share of the restricted Program Open Space fund to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). Under this bill, up to \$12 million could be appropriated for MHAA—funds that are largely awarded as grants to nonprofits and government units for projects contributing to place-based heritage tourism. These grants already generate a documented, powerful economic and community impact across Maryland, and that impact will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a supporter of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area—which serves Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties—I have seen firsthand how MHAA grants make a difference. Here in our region, MHAA grant support has led to projects that increase heritage tourism, sustain local jobs, and bolster the local economy. Statewide, the impact is even greater, with \$2.4 billion in economic contributions, 40,000 jobs supported, and \$320 million in state and local tax revenues generated annually.

In fact, the Town of Mount Airy would not have been able to restore the roof of our beloved historic train station—a defining piece of our town's history—without critical MHAA funding. This project not only preserved a key landmark but also boosted our town's heritage tourism efforts and revitalized community pride. We are also currently seeking MHAA support for our iconic Flat Iron Building, which is at risk. Without MHAA's guidance and support, both of these projects would put our certified downtown Main Street at risk of vacancies and the possible loss of historic structures that shape Mount Airy's unique character.

In FY26, we plan to request MHAA grant support specifically for the Flat Iron project, which will help us preserve this cornerstone of our local heritage and maintain the vitality of our downtown area. Under current law, only \$6 million may be directed annually to MHAA, leaving just \$5.1 million available for grants. Many worthy projects therefore go unfunded, meaning our communities—and the state—miss out on a significant return on investment.

Please support SB0980/HB1327, which will make it possible for up to \$12 million in Program Open Space funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. This legislation will help communities like Mount Airy, and communities across Maryland, preserve and share our unique heritage while fueling economic growth.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0980/HB1327.

Sincerely,



Ashley Collier  
Director of Community Development  
Town of Mount Airy

**FY26 SB098 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brigitte Carty

Position: FAV



## **Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Name:** Brigitte Carty Executive Director

**Organization:** Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway

**Issue:** **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**  
**Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants**

**Date:** February 28, 2025

The Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative SB0980 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Areas' funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually (from Transfer Tax revenues – NOT the General Fund), lifting the current cap of \$6 million.

Heritage Areas have proven to be an impactful community economic driver!

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.

### **Please Note:**

- These potential future funds DO NOT come from the General Fund. Instead, they are allocated from Maryland's Program Open Space (POS), a fund created in 1969 by the State Legislature, that receives a portion of the 0.5% Real Estate Transfer Tax.
- The Transfer Tax, that provides funding for POS, is paid by homebuyers to support the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and heritage area grants, the acquisition of land for public open space such state and local parks, and the preservation of farmland.

- POS, designed to link development to funding for community development, open space and recreational facilities, is a State-Promise made to every homebuyer that a portion of their home purchase cost will support Maryland's Heritage Areas Community Development efforts, greenspace initiatives, and recreational endeavors.
- This legislation DOES NOT guarantee funding but allows for the Heritage Areas Program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding, if and when it should become available.

The LSHG is a non-profit certified Maryland Heritage Area located in Harford and Cecil Counties along the Lower Susquehanna River and Upper Bay, the LSHG's mission is to encourage regional economic development through heritage tourism primarily by supporting public recreation efforts, particularly trail development and public water access, historic preservation, cultural interpretation, and conservation efforts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brigitte C. Carty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brigitte C. Carty  
Executive Director

Attachments:

- Support Memo from Maryland Heritage Areas Authority
- Maryland Heritage Areas Fact Sheet



## 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

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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.**

**MHAA Testimony SB 980 Feb 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Charles Mitchell

Position: FAV

Charles W. Mitchell  
2101 Mt. Carmel Road  
Parkton, MD 21120  
410-952-6610  
[cmitchell1954@gmail.com](mailto:cmitchell1954@gmail.com)

**To: Members of the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

**RE: SB 0980**

February 28, 2025

I write to express my support for Senate Bill 0980, which would lift the spending cap on Maryland Heritage Area Authority grants to a maximum of \$12 million. My understanding is that Maryland law now allows a maximum of \$6 million to be appropriated to MHAA, of which \$5.1 is distributed as grants, and that these funds come from property transfer taxes rather than from the general fund.

Given our region's attraction as a venue for "history tourism," I believe that lifting this cap to the maximum of \$12 million, as proposed in SB 0980, will enable the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation (on whose board I serve) and similar organizations to further develop programming that appeals to our historically minded visitors, who will in turn support small businesses in our local communities. Maryland has a rich history dating both to the colonial era, with sites such as Fort Frederick and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; and the Civil War era, with sites such as Antietam National Battlefield.

I am the author of "Maryland Voices of the Civil War" and "Travels Through American History in the Mid-Atlantic: A Guide for All Ages," both published by Johns Hopkins University Press. In my travel and research for these works, I have seen firsthand the appeal of our state's historic sites—one reason why I love living in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Charles W. Mitchell

# **Lift the Cap Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Daniel Spedden

Position: FAV

# Maryland 2025 Legislative Session SB 980 HB 1327 Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Area Authority – Funding and Grants

Oral Testimony

Daniel P. Spedden

President

Hagerstown/Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau

16 Public Square

Hagerstown, MD 21740

Cell 301.991.0521

[dan@visithagerstown.com](mailto:dan@visithagerstown.com)

## Why Lift the Cap on Heritage Area Funding?

I am the President and CEO of the Hagerstown/Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a 501-C6 corporation with a mission to improve the economy of Hagerstown and Washington County through the promotion of travel and tourism.

Our tourism office partners with and relies heavily upon the work of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. Our Heritage also serves Frederick and Carroll Counties.

While my tourism office focuses on attracting visitors to a variety of events, attractions, and destinations, our Heritage Area, in addition to its preservation work, actively markets and promotes to attract the Cultural and Heritage Tourists. Travelers to our cultural and historic sites are well-educated high-wage earners who stay longer and spend more than our average visitor.

My tourism office invests annually in the operation of the Heritage Area, providing cash to sustain operations and programs. We also provide valuable matching dollars to make our Heritage Area eligible for grants.

Funding for Heritage Areas is capped, and time and inflation tend to erode its impact. Lifting the cap on Heritage Area funding creates an opportunity for the program to grow in the future, to stay relevant, to remain a leader in the preservation of Maryland's cultural and historic resources and to remain a solid partner in helping me grow my community's tourism economy.

# Senate Bill 980 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniel Spedden

Position: FAV

# Visit HAGERSTOWN & Washington County, Maryland

February 5, 2025

Senator Guy Guzzone  
Budget and Taxation Committee Chair  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

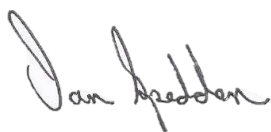
Dear Senator Guzzone,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Maryland Senate Bill 0980 sponsored by Senator Paul Corderman, which seeks to lift the cap on funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA).

Maryland's rich history and diverse cultural heritage are precious assets that deserve our protection and promotion. The MHAA plays a vital role in preserving and interpreting our state's historical landmarks, fostering economic development, and enriching the tourism experience. By allowing more funding the MHAA, we ensure that future generations can appreciate and learn from the stories that shaped our communities. These heritage areas not only celebrate our past but also provide essential resources and support to local economies by attracting visitors and fostering community engagement.

Furthermore, the economic benefits of investing in heritage tourism cannot be overstated. With targeted funding, we can enhance our marketing efforts, improve visitor services, and create captivating programs that highlight the unique stories of Maryland. This, in turn, generates revenue that will benefit local businesses and create jobs in the tourism sector.

Visit Hagerstown supports Senate Bill 0980 as it lifts the cap on funding of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. Your leadership in this matter demonstrates a commitment to preserving our history and strengthening our communities. Thank you for leading this important initiative, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on our state.



Dan Spedden, President



# **Visit Frederick SB 980 Letter of Support 2.28.25.p**

Uploaded by: Dave Ziedelis

Position: FAV



February 28, 2025

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB980 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of Visit Frederick (the Tourism Council of Frederick County), the designated and official destination marketing organization for Frederick County, MD, please accept this letter of support for SB980 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants.

This 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 a member of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA) Board of Directors, I am proud of HCWHA 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.

For FY26, HCWHA has received Intent to Apply notices from 34 nonprofits and government entities that will seek more than \$1.6 million in MHAA project grant awards. The projects will take place in Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. We count our work to facilitate MHAA grants and assist grant applicants to present competitive applications, as one of the organization's 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.

We encourage everyone on the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to support SB980. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Ziedelis". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dave Ziedelis  
Executive Director

# **Testimony for critically needed increased MHAA fund**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Comer

Position: FAV



# Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

12610 Catoctin Furnace Road  
Thurmont, Maryland 21788

Name: Elizabeth Anderson Comer, President

Organization: Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: February 24, 2025

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

House Environment and Transportation, March 5, 2025

President, Elizabeth  
Anderson Comer

Secretary, Makala  
Harrison

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Christopher  
Gardiner

I am writing to affirm how important Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) grants have been to the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society's (CFHS) contributions to the restoration, preservation and interpretation of DNR properties associated with the Catoctin Furnace Historic Site and the larger Cunningham Falls State Park. MHAA's grant funds to DNR through CFHS have been crucially impactful, helping DNR to advance its mission to lead "the state toward a resilient future by using data, partnerships, and an innovative spirit to improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities."

CFHS has benefited from more than \$616,000 in MHAA grant funds. While these funds principally represent large project grants, some smaller mini-grants sourced in MHAA block grants are also included in this total. Of those funds, \$303,100 has been devoted directly to three DNR owned facilities: restoration of the DNR-owned ironworker dwelling that we operate as the Museum of the Ironworker, stabilization of the ruins of the Ironmaster's Mansion, and interpretive media specific to these DNR-owned properties in Cunningham Falls State Park. As you are aware, MHAA grant funds must be matched with non-state funds, so these MHAA funds at Catoctin Furnace have leveraged hundreds of thousands of dollars of funds from private foundations, corporate donors/sponsors, and the federal government, including two NPS Semi quincennial grants. Additionally, considerable in-kind support in the form of donated, goods, services, expertise, and volunteer hours leveraged by the investment of MHAA funds and the resultant investment in DNR properties catalyzed by MHAA funds, is staggering.

Even those MHAA grants that focused on Catoctin Furnace Historic District properties that aren't DNR holdings such as the Collier's Log House, the Carty-Miller House, the F.W. Fraley Store, and the Forgerman's House (all significant properties associated with the historic Furnace community) have been critically impactful. Those MHAA investments have made a positive difference to the State Park, bringing new visitors and awareness to DNR through preservation and programming, resulting in unprecedented numbers of visitors (as evidenced by the DNR furnace parking lot car count which has risen over 3,000 % since the time MHAA-funded projects began in the area).

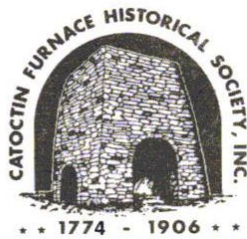
Most recently, CFHS acquired the African American cemetery for the enslaved skilled furnace ironworkers with your assistance. DNR staff are working diligently with CFHS to transfer ownership

Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

240-288-7396

[www.catoctinfurnace.org](http://www.catoctinfurnace.org)

Where History Changes Lives



## Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

12610 Catoctin Furnace Road  
Thurmont, Maryland 21788

to DNR this summer. While the significant land acquisition funds came from another state source, the path that brought us to this point was made possible by MHAA investment in groundbreaking forensic research that has now identified an otherwise long departed and lost descendant community. We are currently seeking \$100,000 in FY26 MHAA funds to extend the African American Cemetery Interpretive Trail across the newly acquired land (soon DNR property), an accessible walk that previously had to stop abruptly at the DNR/private property boundary 360 feet short of the cemetery. Also included in this pending grant proposal is a Cemetery Preservation Plan which will be invaluable to DNR for site management. Descendants linked to enslaved furnace laborers by our MHAA-funded work are visiting from around the globe and have formed a Descendants friends' group that is now planning a second reunion in the area. More than heritage tourism economic impact, which is considerable, we are changing lives and cultivating a new, diverse and inclusive generation to be the future stewards of DNR properties like those associated with Catoctin Furnace. Agnes Summers, a Washington County resident and a DNA connected direct descendant of a Catoctin enslaved individual, has confided that her entire life view has been changed because she now knows she is the proud descendant of a skilled ironworker, not "just an unskilled slave."

MHAA grants are a win for Maryland DNR and Catoctin is just one example of this amazing partnership and synergy. Many MHAA-funded projects have benefited State Parks and other DNR programs, either with funding directly to the state entity or via an affiliated nonprofit such as CFHS. It is our understanding that MHAA even paved the way for state employee time to count as matching funds, even though other state sources of match are ineligible. And, as an added bonus for any busy manager, DNR does not have to administer MHAA funding or account for the overall program that supports such critical work for DNR and therefore all Marylanders!

I sincerely hope that you are able to support SB0980/HB1327, which, as I understand, will have no immediate or mandated change to the MHAA budget. However, it will set the stage for continued work on behalf of DNR resources in the future at Catoctin Furnace and around the state. When it subsequently makes fiscal sense for the Governor to allow a greater share of property transfer tax revenues to fund MHAA, the state will be poised to embrace even more impactful, place-based projects, to the benefit of DNR properties to be enjoyed by all Marylanders.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Comer, President

Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

240-288-7396

[www.catoctinfurnace.org](http://www.catoctinfurnace.org)

Where History Changes Lives

**Written Testimony SB980 HB1327 LOS HCWHA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Shatto

Position: FAV

Name: Elizabeth Scott Shatto, Executive Director



Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date:

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

House Environment and Transportation, March 5, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB0980/HB1327. The time is right to establish the possibility of a greater share of Program Open Space funds to support the important investment made by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in our revenue-producing place-based assets.

Together, Maryland's 13 heritage areas bring about economic benefit to the tune: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

Potentially, SB980 will double those impact numbers. MHAA grants support heritage tourism focused projects, but current law caps the budget at \$6 million, \$5.1 of which goes to our partners for grants. Each year, well-scoring, worthy projects go unfunded. On average there's an \$8 million funding gap and sometimes it is much more.

In our heritage area, 34 projects have been identified in Intent to Apply submissions for FY26, including the following that promise great ROI:

- \$100,000 request from AARCH (African American Culture and Heritage Society) - for the final work necessary to prepare the new Heritage Center for opening - serving our residents and a growing African American travel market.
- \$100,000 request from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, for an updated exhibition experience including more inclusive interpretation throughout - a major overhaul of a visitor experience that promises huge heritage tourism impact.
- \$50,000 request from the City of Frederick Sites of Enslavement project - a multi-phase project, this phase focusing on wayside interpretation and tour development.
- \$100,000 request for the final phase of American Hall restoration (African American resource, strong Civil War connections, will include a visitor experience to boost heritage tourism).
- \$100,000 request for the Doleman Black Heritage Museum building project.
- \$25,000 request from the City of Hagerstown for a Hager House visitor orientation film - in time for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Washington County and the nation.

### CARROLL COUNTY

Hampstead  
Manchester  
Mount Airy  
New Windsor  
Sykesville  
Taneytown  
Union Bridge  
Westminster

### FREDERICK COUNTY

Brunswick  
Burkittsville  
Emmitsburg  
Frederick  
Middletown  
Mount Airy  
Myersville  
New Market  
Rosemont  
Thurmont  
Woodsboro

### WASHINGTON COUNTY

Boonsboro  
Clear Spring  
Funkstown  
Hagerstown  
Hancock  
Keedysville  
Sharpsburg  
Smithsburg  
Williamsport

22 S. Market Street, Suite 215  
Frederick, MD 21701  
info@heartofthecivilwar.org  
heartofthecivilwar.org



SB980 does not carry a spending mandate but it would allow for future MHAA appropriations of up to \$12 million. Passing the law now means that when it makes fiscal sense for the state to take more advantage of the power of Maryland Heritage Areas to generate more tourism spending, create and sustain more jobs, and increase local and state tax bases, we will be poised and ready. This is forward thinking at a time when it is most needed.

For the sake of all Marylanders, we hope SB0980/HB1327 will succeed.

# **TCGB! testimony Erin Frisby.pdf**

Uploaded by: Erin Frisby

Position: FAV



Erin Frisby

Board President, This Could Go Boom!

Regarding: SB0980

Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

My name is Erin Frisby. I am Prince George's County resident and a co-founder of the local nonprofit organization, This Could Go Boom!. This Could Go Boom! supports the local and regional music community with programming that advances equality in the music industry. We are fortunate to have received funding from Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to produce a music and culture festival focusing on the rich history of women and LGBTQIA contributions to the Anacostia region's musical traditions while celebrating local performing musicians and engaging multigenerational and multicultural communities.

This Could Go Boom! is a small grassroots organization that was founded by working musicians. We are volunteer-led and able to recognize and respond to the needs of our community quickly. We operate on a small budget fueled by individual contributions, earned income, and governmental and foundation support. Without funding from MHAA, we would not be able to realize this project which is bringing artists, a public park, a library, local businesses and four towns together to help tell the story of our local culture and to celebrate our exceptional and unique music scene. We received half of the budget we submitted for the project and are creatively bringing it to fruition with enthusiastic in-kind support and dedicated volunteers.

The story of our festival is a wonderful example of the exponential value of MHAA grants. Not only will this project result in a free and accessible public event that will bring together our multicultural community. It has also allowed our small organization to deepen relationships with our local towns. We are partnering with the Port Towns communities and are benefitting from learning more about the needs and desires of our wider community while working closely with Town Mayors and Administrators. We are highlighting our local artists and businesses and bringing everyone together to learn more about themselves and their neighbors.

I encourage you to lift the limit for MHAA funding in order to unlock the potential, innovation, and collaborative spirit of Maryland. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

**SB980 letter of support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gail Owings

Position: FAV



## Testimony to the Budget and Taxation Committee

**Name:** Gail Webb Owings, Executive Director

**Organization:** Eastern Shore Heritage, Inc. - Stories of the Chesapeake: The Heritage Area of Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties

**Issue:** **SB 0980 Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants**

**Position:** Support

The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area enthusiastically supports 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 mandate or guarantee funding 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.

Maryland's Heritage Area program is the most successful of its kind in the country and frequently used as a model for other states seeking to build a strong economic base in heritage tourism. Studies have repeatedly found that heritage tourists stay longer, spend more than any other travelers, and that Maryland is a highly desirable heritage tourism destination. This program is a primary tool for developing heritage projects which enhance both the visitor experience and quality of life for our residents.

Since its certification in 2004, the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area has enabled over \$6.8 million in grants to more than 40 organizations. Recent projects supported include:

- ❖ Expansion of tourism offerings such as the restoration of the Hubbard – Leverage House (one of the few remaining documented safe houses on the Underground Railroad Byway);, the vessels Rosie Parks, Edna Lockwood and Tug Delaware; renovations of the Avalon Theatre, Hardee House, Matapeake Clubhouse; Heritage Walking Tours in Centreville, Kent Narrows, and the Hill; the Chestertown Waterfront Project, and the Sultana Lawrence Wetlands Center.
- ❖ Oral history and research projects for the region's African American heritage including the Rooted Wisdom program and Chesapeake Heartland Project, interpretation in Chestertown, Kent Narrows, Oxford, Rock Hall and on the Cross Island Trail; documentaries such as Kent Storied Landscapes, and Tilghman Island.
- ❖ Restoration of historic structures that become community-based facilities which also attract the traveling public: Betterton's community-built "Most Precious Blood" 1908 Catholic Church, to become a community center; Centreville's 1936 Kennard School, for community programs and exhibits on African-American heritage; Chestertown's Arts Council Building, Denton's 1901 high school, to house culinary arts programs; Federalsburg's Covey & Williams Garage (circa 1912) as a historical museum, Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely, to expand its natural resources education facility and viewing areas, Sumner Hall-one of the few remaining Grand Army Republic Halls, and the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe.
- ❖ Archeology and interpretation at the Hill in Easton.

Unfortunately, many worthy projects have not been able to be funded, stalling projects that are community-building, enhance economic development, expand heritage tourism, support the arts, and ensure our cultural heritage inspires future generations. Please support SB0980.



**Senate Bill 0980.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gary Candelaria

Position: FAV

Name: Gary Candelaria, President of the Board of Directors

Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA)

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: February 28, 2025

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 a member of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA) Board of Directors and a Board member of the Sharpsburg Historical Society and the Sharpsburg Museum of History, I am proud of HCWHA's 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.

It is gratifying to see the number of non-profit and state and local government entities that annually apply for the grants that HCWHA awards. These grants help preserve the history, culture, and beauty of the counties we serve, and improve the attractiveness of the counties to visitors. This in turn promotes the economic welfare of the cities and towns, and the residents of Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. We could do so much more of this work with the requested funding increase from Program Open Space.

For FY26, HCWHA has received Intent to Apply notices from 34 nonprofits and government entities that will seek more than \$1.6 million in MHAA project grant awards. The projects will take place in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties. 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 is far too little; many worthy projects are unfunded, which means loss of ROI for local communities and the state.

I urge you to support SB2980/HB1327, which does not include a spending mandate, but will make way for *up to* \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, please give HB2980/HB1327 your favorable vote.

# **SLR written testimony final.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heidi Schlag

Position: FAV



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 250<sup>th</sup> 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

**SB0980 WCCC Support 2-15-25.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jim Kercheval

Position: FAV



- Washington County Government
- City of Hagerstown
- Town of Williamsport
- Town of Smithsburg
- Hagerstown Community College
- Washington County Free Library
- The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Inc.
- Hagerstown-Washington Co. Chamber of Commerce
- Visit Hagerstown (Local Convention & Visitor's Bureau)
- CHIEF (Hagerstown-Washington Co. Industrial Foundation)

Washington County Community Coalition    Lobbyist: John Favazza, Esquire Mannis Canning & Associates    410.263.7882    [jfavazza@maniscanning.com](mailto:jfavazza@maniscanning.com)

February 27, 2025

The Honorable Guy J. Guzzone  
Chairman, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West Wing  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB-0980/HB1327 - Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Dear Senator Guzzone,

In 2005, local leaders established the Washington County Community Coalition (WCCC), a dedicated advocacy group with a dual mission. Our first priority is to collaboratively develop an agenda of priority projects and issues that all partners support, then advocate on behalf of Washington County for our agenda in Annapolis. Secondly, we strive to educate state leaders and policymakers about the unique strengths, activities, and “brand” of our community. Our partners include Washington County Government, City of Hagerstown, Hagerstown Community College, Washington County Free Library, the Towns of Williamsport and Smithsburg, Visit Hagerstown, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, The Washington County Industrial Foundation (CHIEF), and the Greater Hagerstown Committee.

We are writing to express our strong support for Maryland Senate Bill 0980, which seeks to lift the cap on funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). The Maryland Heritage Area Authority Grant Program provides vital funding to support the preservation of the state's historical, archaeological, natural, and cultural resources. It also fosters economic development through heritage tourism in designated heritage areas. However, over the past three fiscal years, the program has faced a significant funding gap, with an average shortfall of \$8 million between the requested funds and what can be awarded.

Additionally, inflation and the passage of time have diminished the purchasing power of the grants, making it increasingly difficult for organizations to complete their projects effectively. Currently, the program's funding is capped at \$6 million, which is distributed annually to organizations across the state, including Baltimore City and all counties. Given the growing demand for heritage tourism funding, legislation is needed to increase this cap. Specifically, we urge support for the authorization of Program Open Space to transfer funds from \$6 million up to \$12 million annually to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund.

The economic impact of investing in heritage tourism is undeniable. With increased and targeted funding, we can expand marketing initiatives, enhance visitor services, and develop compelling programs that showcase Maryland's rich and diverse history. This not only fosters local pride but also generates significant revenue, supporting businesses and creating jobs within the tourism sector.

The WCCC fully supports Maryland Senate Bill 0980 and strongly encourages its favorable review and passage. We believe that increasing funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority is a critical step toward preserving our cultural heritage and strengthening the economic vitality of our communities.

Sincerely,

Paul Frey, *Managing Partner for The Washington County Community Coalition*

**LOS - SB0980 - 2-14-25.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jonathan Horowitz

Position: FAV



February 14, 2025  
Senator Paul Corderman  
403 James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Corderman,

On behalf of the Washington County Department of Business and Economic Development I am pleased to express our strong support for Maryland SB0980, which seeks to lift the cap on funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). As an economic development agency, we recognize the vital role that heritage tourism plays in driving economic growth, supporting small businesses, and fostering vibrant communities throughout Maryland.

The MHAA has been instrumental in preserving Maryland's unique historical and cultural assets, which serve as economic engines for our communities. By increasing funding for this essential program, we can further leverage heritage tourism as a powerful catalyst for job creation, business development, and increased visitor spending. Investing in these areas strengthens local economies by attracting tourists, enhancing infrastructure, and supporting businesses that rely on heritage-related activities.

The economic impact of lifting the funding cap cannot be overstated. Expanded resources will allow for strategic marketing initiatives, improved visitor services, and the development of engaging programs that showcase Maryland's rich history. These efforts will generate increased tourism revenue, bolster local businesses, and create sustainable employment opportunities in the region.

Washington County Department of Business and Economic Development fully supports SB0980 and appreciates your leadership in championing this initiative. This legislation will not only preserve our cultural heritage but also contribute significantly to Maryland's long-term economic prosperity. We look forward to collaborating on efforts that continue to strengthen our communities and enhance the state's position as a premier heritage tourism destination.

Thank you for your dedication to Maryland's economic and cultural future. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of further assistance in advocating for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jonathan Horowitz'.

Jonathan Horowitz  
Director

Washington County Department of Business and Economic Development  
jhorowitz@washco-md.net  
301-302-5212

100 West Washington Street, Suite 1401 | Hagerstown, MD 21740 | P: 240.313.2280 | F: 240.313.2281

**SB980\_Letter\_3.2.25.pdf**

Uploaded by: Juli McCoy

Position: FAV

March 2, 2025

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: SB980 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants**

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce appreciates your support of the Maryland Heritage Area Authority full funding during the current and previous legislative sessions.

Because these grants are investments that return economic contribution, tax revenue and jobs to Maryland, full funding is important to the economic wellbeing of Marylanders. The tremendous return on investment has recently been documented in the Economic Contribution Analysis commissioned by the Maryland Heritage Area Authority. The statewide economic impact of this \$6 million program is \$2.4 billion, with \$319 million in annual tax revenue (state and local), and with over 33,000 jobs supported and maintained.

Maryland can't afford to miss out on the economic return from investment by the work of Maryland's Heritage Areas. Maryland is stronger for the foundation of 13 certified heritage areas contributing to vibrant communities throughout Maryland. In the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area, grants, technical assistance, and marketing make a difference to such places as the Allegany Museum, Allegany County Historical Society, Allegany County Tourism office, and the Frostburg Mainstreet Program and so many others, including the Chamber of Commerce, which was fortunate to receive funding in 2024, which was used to help preserve the historic building where our organization is housed.

**I urge you to support MHAA at the current \$6 million provided for in the FY26 Department of Planning budget.**

I also want to alert you to a pending statute change (bill number not yet assigned) that would provide a greater share of Program Open Space (state side only) – **up to** \$12 million annually – to invest in heritage tourism projects through MHAA grants. Future funding at \$12 million would generate greater economic return while coming closer to meeting needs expressed by our nonprofit and local government partners.

Lastly, I am concerned about SB 321, a BRFA bill that would transfer \$340,000 from heritage area funding to Department of Planning administration. If successful, this will essentially eliminate three major capital grants and one major noncapital grant that would otherwise be contributing to economic well being at state and local levels.

Now, more than ever, we need Maryland's Heritage Areas to flourish. While elevating a strong sense of regional pride and historical character, Heritage Areas attract talent, increase tourism revenues, enhance business development, and fortify local economies.

**Please approve a fully funded MHAA budget.** Let Maryland's heritage areas continue to benefit our citizenry by stimulating economic growth in the State through heritage tourism and preservation. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Juli McCoy  
President & CEO

[juli@alleganycountychamber.com](mailto:juli@alleganycountychamber.com)

cc: Allegany County Delegation



**SB0980 HB13227 Support testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kimberly Folk

Position: FAV

Wes Moore  
Governor

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

#### Authority Members

Colleen Peters  
Community  
Engagement  
Consultant  
Chair

Ashli Workman  
Allegany County  
Government

Tina Cappetta  
U.S. Department of the  
Interior, NPS

Stuart Czapski  
Cumberland Economic  
Development Corp.

Al Feldstein  
Maryland  
Historical Trust

Michael Mudge  
Allegany County Public  
Schools

Bradford Nixon  
Frostburg State  
University

Ray Morriss  
Mayor, City of  
Cumberland

Rebecca Ruppert  
Allegany College  
of Maryland,  
Vice-Chair

Deidra Ritchie  
Executive Director



**PASSAGES**  
OF THE  
**WESTERN POTOMAC**  
**HERITAGE AREA**



#### 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.

Western Maryland Railway Station, 13 Canal Street, Suite 301, Cumberland, Maryland 21502  
Phone: 301-724-3655 ♦ Fax: 301-724-3659 ♦ Toll Free: 800-989-9394 ♦ TTY/TDD: 800-735-2258  
Email: [canalplace.mail@maryland.gov](mailto:canalplace.mail@maryland.gov) ♦ Website: [www.passagesofthepotomac.org](http://www.passagesofthepotomac.org)

Wes Moore  
Governor

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

**Authority Members**

Colleen Peters  
Community  
Engagement  
Consultant  
Chair

Ashli Workman  
Allegany County  
Government

Tina Cappetta  
U.S. Department of the  
Interior, NPS

Stuart Czapski  
Cumberland Economic  
Development Corp.

Al Feldstein  
Maryland  
Historical Trust

Michael Mudge  
Allegany County Public  
Schools

Bradford Nixon  
Frostburg State  
University

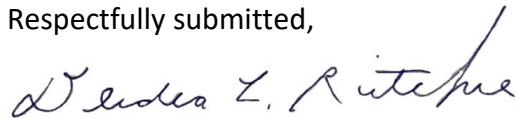
Ray Morriss  
Mayor, City of  
Cumberland

Rebecca Ruppert  
Allegany College  
of Maryland,  
Vice-Chair

Deidra Ritchie  
Executive Director

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

# **MHAC\_Legislative One-Pager\_2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Anderson Wright

Position: FAV



## 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.**

**SB 980\_HB 1327 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Anderson Wright

Position: FAV

**Laura Anderson Wright, Esq.**  
**Heritage Montgomery**  
**Chair, Board of Directors**

**Issue:** SB0980/HB1327

**Position:** Favorable

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

House Environment and Transportation, March 5, 2025

Good afternoon, Committee Members. My name is Laura Anderson Wright. By day, I am a 30-year State employee who loves her job. But I'm also chair of the Board of Directors for Heritage Montgomery, former board member for the MoCo Arts & Humanities Council, Montgomery History, then called MoCo Historical Society, the Sandy Spring Slave Museum & African Art Gallery and the Historic Odd Fellows Lodge. I was raised & volunteered in: 14; lived in 18, 21, 17 and now 16; Thus, I am deeply invested in our State, its ideals and its rich heritage.

As board chair for Heritage Montgomery, I'm dedicated to the mission of preserving and promoting local history, culture, and distinctive natural areas, and fostering stewardship and economic development in Montgomery County, Maryland. When you support us, we support others 10 fold.

I am here to ask for your support of SB 980 cross-filed as HB 1327.

Here's the good news: I'm not asking you for money.

Here's the even *better* news: You'll continue to get a hefty return on your investment. In District 39 alone: we have funded Praterstown (FY 25 mini-grant and a site on the Governor's radar), Seneca Creek State Park (map brochures and building restoration) and Pleasant View (we have supported the restoration of the historic church and schoolhouse for the last 10 years with \$ and technical support).

The ask: I'm simply asking you to lift the cap on Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) funding to allow the potential for more funding through Project Open Space.

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

I implore you to give SB 980/HB1327 a favorable report.

Thank you.

**SB0980 PresMD FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Houston

Position: FAV





# PRESERVATION MARYLAND

March 4, 2025

Hon. Guy Guzzone  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland

## **RE: SB0980 FAVORABLE**

**Chairperson Guzzone,**

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB0980** – a piece of legislation that would increase allowable funding levels for the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) as well as increase the size of grants awarded by the program.

Preservation Maryland is the nonprofit, statewide voice for historic preservation that harnesses the power of historic places by revitalizing and reinvesting in communities, advocating, and building the historic trades workforce for the benefit of all Marylanders. (Learn more at: [presmd.org](http://presmd.org))

The MHAA is a critical component of the state's economic engine. In addition to generating nearly \$2 billion in economic activity and supporting nearly 33,000 full-and-part-time positions, the program also serves as the principal heritage tourism effort for Maryland. In short, the success of MHAA is intrinsically tied to the success of the state – *especially in difficult economic situations*.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this legislation does not mandate an appropriation but instead gives the administration *discretion* to fund up to \$9 million – thereby negating concerns about budget implications in the short term. Therefore, we believe SB0980 is a thoughtful and timely piece of legislation, and we urge a favorable report.

### **Favorable**

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Redding, President & CEO

# **MHAA SB0980 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Challenger

Position: FAV



Testimony: SB980

Budget and Taxation Committee

Name: Lisa Challenger, Executive Director

Organization: Beach to Bay Heritage Area

**Issue: Support SB0980 (HB1327)**

Position: Support full funding in FY26

The Beach to Bay 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.

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.

In the Beach to Bay Heritage Area, these funds have supported the renovation effort of Henry's Hotel, Ocean City's first boarding house and hotel for blacks, new exhibits at Germantown School, a Rosenwald School, repairs to Furnace Town's historic Nassawango Iron Furnace, restoration of the skipjack, City of Crisfield and the Pocomoke Indian Nation, traveling exhibit. These five projects alone total more than \$250,000 in leveraged dollars.

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 rural 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 Beach to Bay Heritage Area appreciates your continued support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority full funding during the current and previous legislative sessions.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Challenger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Challenger, Beach to Bay Heritage Area

443-783-3035

[info@beachesbayswaterways.org](mailto:info@beachesbayswaterways.org)



## 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.



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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:



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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.**



## 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

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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.

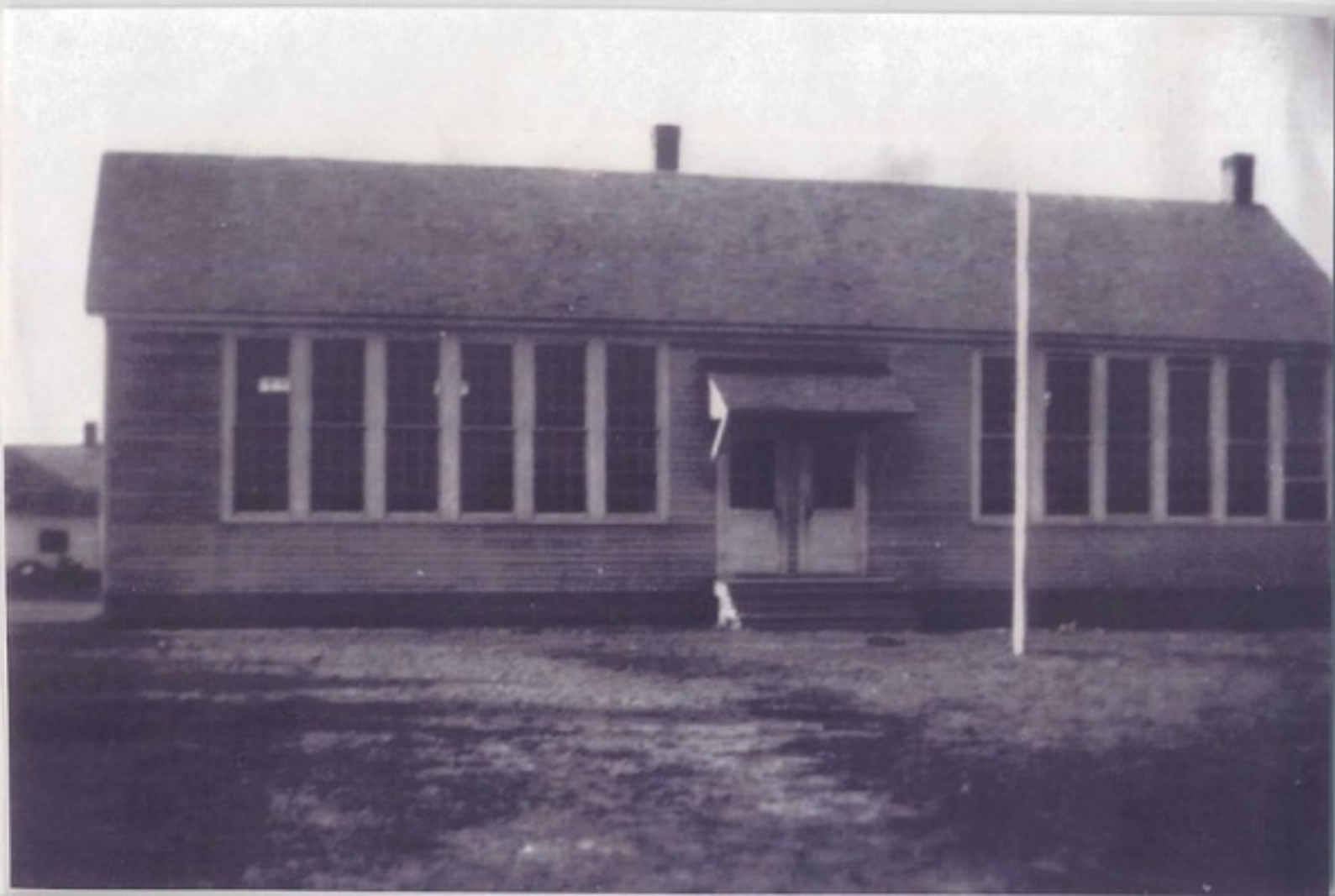
The following MHAA members were absent:

- 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.







# **Packet of Support from Southern Maryland National**

Uploaded by: Lucille Walker

Position: FAV



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](mailto: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 that reads "Francis Gray". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Francis Gray  
Piscataway Conoy Tribal Chairman



# St. Mary's County Museum Division

## Department of Recreation & Parks

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### 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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#### **Commissioners of St. Mary's County**

*James R. Guy, President*  
*Michael R. Alderson, Jr.*  
*Eric S. Colvin*  
*Michael L. Hewitt*  
*Scott R. Ostrow*

#### **Board of Trustees**

*Connor Wolfe, President*  
*Mike Brown, Vice President*  
*Michael Blackwell, Secretary*

*Kathy Bailey*  
*Dr. Catherine Bowes*  
*Robin Finnacom*  
*Lynn Fitrell*  
*Laura Friess*  
*Karla Langhus*  
*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.

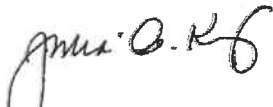
As an employee of St. Mary's College of Maryland, a resident of southern Maryland, and a member of the Interim Board of Directors of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, I have seen up close the real world benefits of this program. Current funding has supported projects that contribute not only 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

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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.**

# **Serenity Farm Inc Senate Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lucille Walker

Position: FAV

## SERENITY FARM, INC.

PO Box 305  
Benedict, Maryland 20612  
(301) 274-3829

### 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.

# **Small Museums\_Senate Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lucille Walker

Position: FAV



Veronica Gallardo, Principle  
Public History Practitioner  
Serving the DMV area!

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Veronica Gallardo

Organization: Small Museums But Mighty

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

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

Date: February 27, 2025

The Small Museums But Mighty 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.

"Small Museums but Mighty" has greatly benefited from this program, allowing us to sustain a variety of museum initiatives that offer more personal experiences for Marylanders and promote deeper engagement. By personalizing tours and encouraging meaningful dialogue with our guests, we can focus on niche topics and local history, showcasing unique artifacts and stories that larger institutions might overlook. The Maryland Heritage Areas program supports small museums, which often act as community hubs, fostering local involvement and cultural pride. This initiative enables many small museums to prioritize the promotion of local artists, cultures, and histories, providing a platform for new voices and regional narratives. Furthermore, the Maryland Heritage Areas program helps small museums create enriching experiences that Marylanders can take pride in. It empowers these institutions to serve as stewards of our local environment and culture, building strong community support and fostering a sense of connection and belonging.

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.

Small museums in Maryland can be found in vibrant urban centers as well as serene rural areas, playing a crucial role in the tapestry of our communities by providing essential links to culture and heritage. These institutions are a source of pride and deserve your support!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Veronica Gallardo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Gallardo

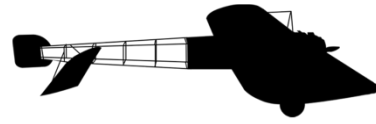
President

Small Museums But Mighty!

# **ATHA Testimony Letter - SENATE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Luke Perez

Position: FAV



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.

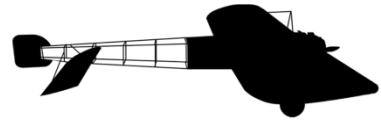
There is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and communities. In these difficult economic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

Micheal Freiman  
President  
Field of Firsts Foundation  
[FieldofFirsts@gmail.com](mailto:FieldofFirsts@gmail.com)



1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive | College Park, MD 20740  
Phone: 301-864-6029 | Email: [FieldofFirsts@gmail.com](mailto:FieldofFirsts@gmail.com)  
[www.FieldofFirsts.com](http://www.FieldofFirsts.com)



Smithsonian Affiliations

# **MHAA Support Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mallory Rosenfeld

Position: FAV



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Name: Tom Gilmore, Chief Land Preservation Officer

Organization: American Battlefield Trust

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: 2/28/2025

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 place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a staff member of the American Battlefield Trust, my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that the American Battlefield Trust, with MHAA grant support, has contributed 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.

With help from the MHAA, the American Battlefield Trust has been able to preserve properties on the Antietam battlefield in Washington County, Maryland. Without the support of MHAA, these properties may not have been preserved.

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. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, and the general public who visit protected battlefields, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

*Tom Gilmore*

# **SB0980 - MTC Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matt Libber

Position: FAV



February 25, 2025

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB0980 - Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC). Maryland Tourism Coalition is a trade organization with members representing all areas of tourism in the State of Maryland. Our mission is to support businesses and organizations that cater to the tourism industry through education, networking, and advocacy. I am writing to express MTC's strong support for the **Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants** legislation. This vital initiative plays a crucial role in preserving Maryland's rich history, while simultaneously boosting local tourism and driving economic growth across our communities. Only Maryland and Pennsylvania have state heritage areas modeled after the successful national heritage area program to focus resources and attention on cultural tourism destinations. There are 13 heritage areas in Maryland touching every Maryland county and Baltimore City.

Maryland's heritage areas serve as cornerstones of cultural tourism, attracting visitors from across the nation and beyond. These areas highlight the diverse history, natural beauty, and cultural significance of our state, encouraging travel that supports local businesses, hospitality services, and artisan industries. By investing in these areas through increased funding and grants, we not only preserve Maryland's unique historical narrative but also stimulate job creation and foster community pride.

This legislation will empower the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to continue the development of educational programs, historical site restorations, and cultural events—all of which enhance the visitor experience and increase tourism revenue. Studies consistently show that heritage tourism contributes significantly to local economies, with visitors spending more and staying longer when engaging with historic and cultural attractions. Maryland Heritage Areas are an economic engine throughout the state, with a \$7 return on investment for every \$1 in state funds. The current Heritage Area Program is capped at \$6M - this legislation would increase the cap to \$12M. The requested allocation of funds in this bill comes from the real estate transfer tax and will directly financially benefit our cultural tourism destinations and provide economic growth. Over the past three years, an \$8 million funding gap in Heritage Area grant requests verses the available funding has kept impactful tourism projects on the shelf instead of in your community. Maryland Heritage Areas contribute a combined total of \$2.4 billion to the Maryland economy, supports and sustains a combined total of 33,815 full-time and part-time jobs throughout the state, and generates \$319.8 million in economic impact.



**MARYLAND  
TOURISM  
COALITION**

Increased support for this legislation ensures that Maryland remains a vibrant destination for tourists while protecting the treasures that make our state distinctive. I urge you to champion this bill and help ensure the continued growth and vitality of Maryland's tourism sector.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration and we ask for a favorable report for SB0980.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Libber  
Legislative Chair  
Maryland Tourism Coalition  
[mllibber@mdsoccerplex.org](mailto:mllibber@mdsoccerplex.org)  
301-528-1480

# **sb0980-favorable-anacostia-trails-heritage-area-20**

Uploaded by: Meagan Baco

Position: FAV



Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc.  
4318 Gallatin Street, Hyattsville, MD 20781

Friday, February 28, 2025

## TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Meagan Baco, Executive Director

Organization: Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc.

Issue: **SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

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

Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc., the nonprofit management entity of the state-certified Heritage Area in Prince George's County is in strong support of SB0980 which will increase investment in heritage tourism for economic development and cultural understanding across Maryland.

SB0980 will allow the Maryland Heritage Areas Program to receive up to \$12M annually, lifting the current cap of \$6M. There is a \$6M-\$8M gap in funding ability each year between excellent projects and available grant funded, stalling high-impact locally-based economic development projects.

Considering the circumstance of Maryland's budget, it is important to note that 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, if and when it should become available.

Cultural tourism is a part of the solution to Maryland's budget and especially in Prince George's County considering our proximity to Washington, DC and our rich diverse history that visitors are seeking out. For every \$1 Maryland invests in this program, it gets \$7 back and 40,000 jobs are supported.

This legislation is needed now to make a pathway towards funding cultural tourism at the valuation that it deserves— heritage tourists stay longer and spent more at local businesses— and Maryland has the historic, cultural, and natural assets that visitors seek out to experience.

Respectfully,

Meagan Baco, Executive Director  
Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc.  
[meagan@anacostiatrails.org](mailto:meagan@anacostiatrails.org)



**sb0980-favorable-md-museums-assoc-2025-02-28.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meagan Baco

Position: FAV



Maryland Museums Association, Inc.  
919 W 34<sup>th</sup> Street, PO Box 4715, Baltimore, MD 21211  
mdmuseums.org

February 28, 2025

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE**

**Meagan Baco, Chair, Maryland Museums Association, Inc.**

**SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

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

The statewide Maryland Museums Association, Inc. nonprofit is in full support of SB0980 Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants.

There is no museum-specific funding source from the State of Maryland to our more than 400 museums — thus, the grants from Heritage Areas are essential. Eighty-five percent of the \$6M Maryland Heritage Area Authority allocation from Program Open Space is awarded as grants to every corner of the state. However, capped at \$6M, the Heritage Areas Program has a \$8M funding gap annually leaving important, interesting, and impactful cultural projects and programs on the vine.

We understand that SB0980 makes wise changes to the existing Heritage Area Program like increasing the top request amount per grant and reducing the match for nonprofits. That is why, even in this tough budget year, it is important that this legislation is passed.

Maryland's museums have a \$1.34B dollar positive financial impact on the state's economy (Oxford Economics, 2017). Moreover, the Maryland Heritage Areas Program contributes \$2.4B to the Maryland economy, supports and sustains 33,815 full-time and part-time jobs, and generates \$319.8M in economic impact (Parker-Phillips, 2019). What these numbers cannot show is the educational and emotional impact of increased cultural awareness to Maryland's diverse population.

Maximizing the economic and intangible impact of museums through tourism is a strategy that Maryland should immediately and intentionally employ on the eve of the US Semiquincentennial & MD Two Fifty (2026) and Maryland 400 (2034). Making improvements and supporting a raise to the funding cap for the Heritage Areas Program from \$6M to \$12M is an excellent start with SB0980.

Respectfully,

Meagan Baco, Chairperson  
Maryland Museums Association, Inc.

**SB980\_RMC\_SupportTestimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Molli Cole

Position: FAV



50 Harry S. Truman Parkway • Annapolis, MD 21401  
Office: 410-841-5772 • Voice: 410-841-5761 • TTY: 800-735-2258  
Email: [rmc.mda@maryland.gov](mailto:rmc.mda@maryland.gov)  
Website: [www.rural.maryland.gov](http://www.rural.maryland.gov)

*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 980 – Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
March 4, 2025

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 980 – Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants.** This bill enhances funding and support for Maryland’s certified heritage areas. The bill would expand Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) to award grants and loans to local jurisdictions or other appropriate entities specifically for managing these heritage areas. Additionally, it seeks to increase the maximum funding amount for certain grants to \$300,000, providing more substantial financial support for heritage projects. Another significant change is the adjustment of how Program Open Space funds are allocated - reducing the portion that can be used for operating expenses from 10% to 7%. These provisions aim to strengthen the preservation and promotion of Maryland’s cultural and historical resources while ensuring more funding is directed toward direct program support and project implementation.

A Maryland Heritage Area is a designated region recognized for its unique historical, cultural, and natural significance. These areas receive support from the MHAA to promote heritage tourism, economic development, and resource preservation. Within a heritage area, communities, businesses, and organizations can apply for grants and other funding to support projects that enhance historic sites, conserve landscapes, develop visitor experiences, and strengthen local economies. Maryland currently has 13 certified Heritage Areas, each with a distinct focus, such as maritime history, agricultural heritage, Heritage Areas encompass parts of every county in the state, as well as the City of Baltimore. Established in 1996, the Heritage Areas Program is one of the key initiatives aimed at promoting heritage tourism in Maryland.

Maryland's Heritage Areas significantly contribute to the state's economy by attracting visitors whose expenditures bolster local jobs, businesses, and tax revenues within communities. Annually, these Heritage Areas **contribute \$2.4 billion** into Maryland's economy and **generate \$319.8 million in combined state and local tax revenue**. Additionally, they support approximately **40,000 jobs** across various sectors, including museum personnel, trail construction teams, and event organizers.

With additional funding, the Maryland Heritage Areas will be able to fully support community-driven projects that boost local economies, with 62% of money spent in a community remaining there. This investment will also help prepare for the celebrations of America's 250th anniversary in 2026 and Maryland's 400th anniversary in 2034, ensuring that every voice is heard and every story is told - from the mountains of Western Maryland to the shores of the Chesapeake.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 980.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic, or regulatory solutions.

*“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”*

# **SB0980 favorable testimony - Washington County Art**

Uploaded by: Nicole Abuhamada

Position: FAV



# WASHINGTON COUNTY Arts Council

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34 South Potomac Street  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740  
phone 301-791-3132  
[www.washingtoncountyarts.com](http://www.washingtoncountyarts.com)  
[info@washingtoncountyarts.com](mailto:info@washingtoncountyarts.com)

Name: Nicole Abuhamada, Executive Director

Organization: Washington County Arts Council

Issue: SB0980/HB1327

Position: Favorable

Date: 2/28/2024

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 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 the Washington County Arts Council, my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that the Washington County Arts Council, with MHAA grant support, has contributed 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.

For FY26, we request \$18,000 in MHAA grant support for *Painting the Past: The Legacy of Historic Hagerstown*, a heritage tourism initiative designed to generate economic impact through cultural tourism. This project will feature a self-guided historical tour, commissioned fine art paintings by local master artists who will depict historic sites as they appear a century or more ago, and an educational documentary. A collaboration between the Washington County Arts Council, the Washington County Historical Society, and the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, this initiative will enhance public engagement, preserve local history, and drive tourism revenue.

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. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

# **Bay MHAA Funding Testimony (002).pdf**

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV



Testimony: SB980

Budget and Taxation Committee

Name: Lisa Challenger, Executive Director

Organization: Beach to Bay Heritage Area

**Issue: MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS PROGRAM**

Maryland Department of Planning, FY2025 Budget Request: \$6,000,000

Position: Support full funding in FY26

The Beach to Bay Heritage Area appreciates your continued support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority full funding during the current and previous legislative sessions. For FY26, the \$6 million budgeted for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) is a critical need. The program has received 236 Intent to Apply forms for exciting and meaningful grant possibilities, which represents a need that is more than double the current grant funds available. These grants are investments that return economic contribution, tax revenue and jobs to Maryland.

Heritage Areas are not just good for the soul; they are also very good for the wallet. For every \$1 Maryland invests in this program, it gets \$7 back. That means the statewide impact of \$6 million is \$2.4 billion pumped into the local economy every year and 40,000 jobs are supported from museum guards to trail builders to festival organizers.

In the Beach to Bay Heritage Area, these funds have supported the renovation effort of Henrys Hotel, Ocean City's first boarding house and hotel for blacks, new exhibits at Germantown School, a Rosenwald School, repairs to Furnace Town's historic Nassawango Iron Furnace, restoration of the skipjack, City of Crisfield and the Pocomoke Indian Nation, traveling exhibit. These five projects alone total more than \$250,000 in leveraged dollars.

Beach to Bay Heritage Area urges you to support MHAA at the current \$6 million provided for in the FY26 Department of Planning budget.



I'd also like to alert you to a pending statute change that would provide a greater share of Program Open Space (state side only) – up to \$12 million annually – to invest in heritage tourism projects through MHAA grants. Future funding at \$12 million would generate greater economic return while bridging the gap with our nonprofit and local government partners.

Please approve a fully funded MHAA budget. Let Maryland's heritage areas continue to elevate and celebrate the collective stories of our heritage and cultural traditions.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Challenger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Challenger" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Challenger, Beach to Bay Heritage Area

443-783-3035

[info@beachesbayswaterways.org](mailto:info@beachesbayswaterways.org)

# **Final SB 980 - Senator Corderman Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

**PAUL D. CORDERMAN**  
*Legislative District 2*  
Frederick and Washington Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 403  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3903 · 301-858-3903  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3903  
Paul.Corderman@senate.state.md.us

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

March 4, 2025

Senate Budget & Tax Committee  
Chair Guy Guzzone  
Vice Chair Jim Rosapepe  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Budget & Tax Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present SB 980, which improves the effectiveness of Maryland Heritage Areas (MHA) across our state. Specifically, the bill as drafted increases the cap on certain grants given by MHA's from \$100,000 to \$300,000 and also decreases from 10% to 7% the percentage of Program Open Space Funds transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund that may be used for certain operating expenses.

From Harford County's Vulcan Quarry Trail to Southern Maryland's Grandma's Hand's film, and even Washington County's historic Maryland Theatre – Maryland Heritage Areas have provided critical funding for projects that touch every corner of our state. SB 980 helps give more flexibility and opportunity for these projects to continue positively impacting our shared citizenry.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 980.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P.D. Corderman'.

Paul D. Corderman  
District 2 – Washington & Frederick Counties

# **SB0980-HB1327 Letter of Support - Senator Kramer.p**

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

**BENJAMIN F. KRAMER**  
*Legislative District 19*  
Montgomery County

Finance Committee



Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 401  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3151 · 301-858-3151  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3151  
Fax 410-841-3740 · 301-858-3740  
Ben.Kramer@senate.state.md.us

*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

To: Senator Paul D. Corderman and Delegate William J. Wivell

From: Senator Ben Kramer

Date: February 28, 2025

Re: SB0980/HB1327 Natural Resources-Maryland Heritage Areas Authority-Funding and Grants

---

I write to support the passage of SB0980/HB1327 Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants, a bill intended to lift the funding cap on Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) and allow for a greater share of property tax revenues to be budgeted through the state-side of Program Open Space (POS) for the MHAA. The current legislation caps the funding for MHAA at \$6 million. SB980/HB1327 would double this cap to \$12 million and does not guarantee funding for MHAA but allows for the program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, should it become available.

It is my understanding that this legislation is not a request for an increase of new money from the general fund and simply makes way for the possibility of a greater share of the restricted POS fund to further strengthen the economy at local and state levels. Maryland's thirteen (13) certified Heritage Areas cover a portion of every county, and these Heritage Areas contribute to our state's economy. They attract tourism and visitors, whose dollars support jobs, businesses, and tax growth in communities across our state.

The Montgomery County Heritage Area program is dedicated to stimulating the economy and seventeen (17) non-profit and local government entities have already submitted 'Intent to Apply' forms for FY26.

For these reasons, I support SB0980/HB1327.

**SB980 HB1327 LOS HCWHA PC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

HEART OF THE  
**CIVIL WAR**  
HERITAGE AREA

Senator Paul D. Corderman  
James Senate Office Building, Room 403  
11 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 7, 2025

Dear Senator Corderman,

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area is grateful for your sponsorship of SB0980 (HB1327), which will allow for a greater share of property tax revenues (through the state-side of Program Open Space or POS) to be budgeted for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). As you know, a beautiful aspect of this bill is that it is not a request for an increase or for new money that would take from the general fund. It simply makes way for the possibility of a greater share of the restricted POS fund so that we can build upon an already impressive track record of strengthening the economy at local and state levels.

**CARROLL  
COUNTY**

Hampstead  
Manchester  
Mount Airy  
New Windsor  
Sykesville  
Taneytown  
Union Bridge  
Westminster

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties, appreciates your consistent support. You have helped our heritage area, one of 13 certified by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), achieve impressive impact - including \$450.2 in economic contribution to our local communities, nearly 6,400 jobs supported and sustained, and \$60.3 in local and state taxes generated. The statewide figures for heritage area impact are: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

**FREDERICK  
COUNTY**

Brunswick  
Burkittsville  
Emmitsburg  
Frederick  
Middletown  
Mount Airy  
Myersville  
New Market  
Rosemont  
Thurmont  
Woodsboro

As a program dedicated to stimulating the economy through heritage tourism development, **our contributions to the economic well-being Maryland can only grow.** Eligibility for MHAA grants requires location in and support of the local heritage area. When funded under the current statute, **up to \$6 million** may be budgeted annually for MHAA, with \$5.1 million is available for grants. Many worthy projects remain unfunded. On average, the gap between available funds and what is needed is \$8 million annually, but some years it is much higher.

In our heritage area, 34 projects have been identified in Intent to Apply submissions for FY25. Many are from Washington County, including the following from Hagerstown that promise great ROI:

**WASHINGTON  
COUNTY**

Boonsboro  
Clear Spring  
Funkstown  
Hagerstown  
Hancock  
Keedysville  
Sharpsburg  
Smithsburg  
Williamsport

- \$100,000 request for the final phase of American Hall restoration (African American resource, strong Civil War connections, will include a visitor experience to boost heritage tourism).
- \$100,000 request the Doleman Black Heritage Museum building project.
- \$50,000 for a monumental sculpture memorial to George Washington.
- \$25,000 request from the City of Hagerstown for a Hager House visitor orientation film - in time for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Washington County and the nation.

Thank you for your steadfast support of Maryland's Heritage Areas. For the sake of all Marylanders, we hope for success with SB0980/HB1327.

22 S. Market Street, Su  
Frederick, MD 21701  
info@heartofthecivilwar.org  
heartofthecivilwar.org

With great appreciation,

*Elizabeth Scott Shatto*

Elizabeth Scott Shatto  
Executive Director



# **Testimonial Letter for HCWHA 2.28.2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Axilbund

Position: FAV



# MAIN STREET MIDDLETOWN

19 West Main Street, Middletown, Maryland 21769

**Name: Becky Axilbund, Executive Director**

**Organization: Main Street Middletown, MD Inc.**

**Issue: SB0980/HB1327**

**Position: Favorable**

**Date: 2.28.2025**

**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 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 Main Street Middletown, MD Inc. we are active members in our local Heritage Area - the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that Main Street Middletown, MD Inc. with MHAA grant support, has contributed 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.

Main Street Middletown, MD Inc. has benefitted from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority through several impactful projects. Most notably, they supported our efforts at purchasing two endangered historic buildings along our Main Street. Subsequently, with additional aid from the Heritage Area, we were able to rehabilitate these two structures converting one into a local welcome center. The Heritage Area also played a prominent role when the Town of Middletown commemorated its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017 with funds going towards the creation of an unused lot into a pocket park with seating, landscaping, and several large/awe-inspiring historic interpretative signs. Earlier support was garnered in 2014 for the 150<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the Civil War Monocacy Campaign when Civil War soldiers threatened Middletown with a ransom payment or it would be set on fire. The Heritage Area funds allowed us to preserve the ransom note and create a display case to allow for public viewing. The Heritage Areas has been a consistent partner in Main Street Middletown's initiatives at attracting people to our downtown businesses by helping to build our tourism products.

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. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

**2025-02-28-Favorable to SB0980-NationalRdHeritageF**

Uploaded by: Reuben Moss

Position: FAV



**NATIONAL ROAD  
HERITAGE  
FOUNDATION**

---

Name: Reuben L. Moss, Executive Director

Organization: National Road Heritage Foundation

Issue: SB0980

Position: Favorable

Date: 2/28/2025

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, March 4, 2025

I am writing in support of SB0980, 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 place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As Director of the National Road Museum and Boonsboro Trolley Station Museum, my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties.

Our two small facilities have greatly benefitted from MHAA grant support through the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. In December 2024, we opened the only museum in Maryland dedicated entirely to the history and importance of the first federally funded roads project in the United States, The National Road, which is today designated a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road, 170 miles of which is also a Maryland Scenic Byway. In under three months, that museum has already attracted visitors from 6 states. In the previous year, our Boonsboro Trolley Station Museum was updated with several new exhibits to better represent several important local and regional history topics and has itself attracted tours from visitors of several additional states as well as international tourists. Neither of these projects would have been completed without the direct grant support of the MHAA and the confidence which that support instills in other sponsors.



**P. O. Box 71, Boonsboro, MD 21713**  
**[www.nationalrdfoundation.org](http://www.nationalrdfoundation.org)**  
*The National Road Heritage Foundation is a 501(c)3,  
Not-For-Profit Organization. Donations are tax-deductible.*





NATIONAL ROAD  
**HERITAGE**  
FOUNDATION

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I am proud that we and our parent organization, the National Road Heritage Foundation, with MHAA grant support, have contributed 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.

When funded under the current statute, up to \$6 million may be budgeted annually for MHAA, with \$5.1 million of that amount available for grants. That's far too little; many worthy projects are unfunded, which means a loss of ROI for local communities and the state. Please support SB2980, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, I hope you will support SB0980.



P. O. Box 71, Boonsboro, MD 21713  
[www.nationalrdfoundation.org](http://www.nationalrdfoundation.org)  
*The National Road Heritage Foundation is a 501(c)3,  
Not-For-Profit Organization. Donations are tax-deductible.*



**SB0980 FY26 MHAA Testimony BNHA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shauntee Daniels

Position: FAV



February 28, 2025

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE (Raise the cap)**

**Name: Shauntee Daniels**

**Organization: Baltimore National Heritage Area**

**Issue: SUPPORT SB0980 (HB1327)**

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

Every cent of the \$6 million budgeted for the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) is needed and we ask for your support to keep the funds, in their entirety, within the MHAA.

MHAA is funded with restricted Program Open Space funds. MHAA is distinct from the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) which is funded through the general fund.

**BNHA generates \$753.7 million annually, primarily through heritage tourism, which accounts for \$749.7 million of the total impact. This robust economic activity is fueled by visitors to iconic sites like Fort McHenry, the B & O Railroad, Edgar Allan Poe Museum, and the National Aquarium and many other heritage attractions.**

**In Baltimore we have been investing state, local, federal, and private dollars into the Baltimore National Heritage Area since 2000.** Maryland investments take time and when they are made over a period of years, is benefit the communities of the in which we serve. With these investments we have assisted dozens upon dozens of historic sites, attractions, natural resources, and cultural organizations in becoming more visitor-ready and visitor-friendly. And **the timing could not be more critical** as we continue these investments. As many look at Baltimore with fear and trepidation, cancelling visits, school tours, conferences, etc it is more important than ever that we make these investments so that visitors and residents have the best experiences possible. We are also, in a difficult position because we tell stories that are diverse, equity and inclusion is under attack in storytelling.

- With your support we can potentially fund up to more distinct capital and non-capital projects throughout the heritage area this year. If awarded, these projects supports **Job Creation:** BNHA supports **6,422 jobs**, with 6,408 stemming from heritage tourism activities and an additional 14 from the organization's operations and grant making.
- **Tax Revenue:** BNHA contributes **\$60.9 million** annually in state and local tax revenue, supporting critical public services and infrastructure.



*"Sankofa ~ Go back and fetch it. We must look back to the past so that we can understand how we became what we are and move forward to a better future."*



1524 Hollins Street, Baltimore, MD 21223 ★ 410.878.6411 ★ [ExploreBaltimore.org](http://ExploreBaltimore.org)

• **Leverage of Federal Funds:** Every dollar of federal investment in BNHA is amplified by matching local and private funding, creating a multiplier effect that sustains historic preservation projects, community development, and tourism initiatives.

Last, but not least, there should be additional funding to support Heritage Area Management for operations. The Heritage Areas budget remains at \$100,000 since the program began, despite rising expenses each year.

Thank you again for your on-going support. We appreciate all that you do and we wish you the best of luck during the FY26 legislative session

Respectfully,  
*Shauntee*

Shauntee Daniels, Executive Director  
Baltimore National Heritage Area



*"Sankofa ~ Go back and fetch it. We must look back to the past so that we can understand how we became what we are and move forward to a better future."*



**Favorable SB0980:HB1327.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tereance Moore

Position: FAV



Tereance Moore

Board Member, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Owner, Tereance Moore Consulting, LLC

Founder & CEO, Mediation First, Inc.

Cell: 240-291-8587

Email: t.r.moore@tmooreconsultant.com

Hagerstown, MD

02/28/25

- Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
- House Environment and Transportation Committee

Subject: Support for SB0980/HB1327 – Lifting the Cap on Heritage Area Funding

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB0980 and HB1327, legislation that will lift the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) funding cap, enabling more robust investment in heritage tourism and preservation across our state. As a board member of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA), a local business owner, and a dedicated community advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the economic and cultural benefits that heritage tourism brings to Maryland.

Maryland's 13 certified Heritage Areas are vital economic engines, contributing \$2.4 billion annually to our state's economy, supporting 40,000 jobs, and generating \$320 million in state and local tax revenue. However, despite this tremendous impact, funding for the Maryland Heritage Areas Program has been capped at \$6 million annually. This limitation has led to an \$8 million gap over the last three years, stalling high-impact projects that could otherwise drive tourism, job creation, and local business growth.

As an HCWHA board member, I take pride in our efforts to facilitate MHAA grants and assist nonprofits and local government entities in securing funds for transformative heritage projects. In FY26 alone, HCWHA has received Intent to Apply notices from 34 organizations seeking more than \$1.6 million in funding for projects in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties. Yet, under the current cap, many of these worthy projects will go unfunded resulting in missed economic opportunities for our local communities and the state.

Lifting the cap through SB0980/HB1327 does not create a spending mandate; rather, it allows up to \$12 million in Program Open Space funds to be allocated to MHAA if the funding is available. This investment will allow Maryland to:

- Fully fund community-driven projects that strengthen local economies, keeping 62% of every dollar spent in the community.
- Prepare for milestone celebrations, including America's 250th anniversary in 2026 and Maryland's 400th anniversary in 2034.
- Ensure diverse histories are preserved and shared—from the mountains of Western Maryland to the shores of the Chesapeake.

As a business owner and proponent of economic growth, I understand heritage tourism's critical role in sustaining small businesses, museums, and cultural sites, drawing visitors to Maryland and supporting the local economy. By increasing MHAA's funding capacity, we are investing in Maryland's future—creating jobs, supporting businesses, and ensuring our shared history continues to inspire generations to come.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB0980 and HB1327 and unlock the full potential of Maryland's Heritage Areas to benefit all Marylanders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tereance Moore', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tereance Moore

Board Member, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Owner, Tereance Moore Consulting, LLC

Founder & CEO, Mediation First, Inc.

Cell: 240-291-8587

Email: [t.r.moore@tmooreconsultant.com](mailto:t.r.moore@tmooreconsultant.com)

Hagerstown, MD

**SB0980HB1327.pdf**

Uploaded by: Vickie Grinder

Position: FAV



## THE COMMISSIONERS OF THURMONT

615 East Main Street  
11 Water Street  
P.O. Box 17  
Thurmont, Maryland 21788  
301-271-7313  
Fax: 301-271-2155

Name: Town of Thurmont  
Organization: Department of Economic & Community Development  
Issue: SB0980/HB1327  
Position: Favorable  
Date: February 21, 2025

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 place-based heritage tourism. The impact of MHAA grants is already well documented, and it will grow as the MHAA budget grows.

As a staff member and supporter of MHAA of the town of Thurmont, my local heritage area is the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a nonprofit serving Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties. I am proud that the town of Thurmont, with MHAA grant support, has contributed to the statewide heritage area program with an impact: \$2.4 billion in economic contribution, 40,000 jobs supported and sustained, \$320 million in local and state tax revenues generated annually.

MHAA has been very supportive of the town of Thurmont over the last decade and have assisted us in several projects such as beautiful welcome signs entering the gateways of Thurmont to make our residents proud and our visitors welcome. Thurmont has also been awarded funds for our wayfaring signs that direct folks around town to historical places, educational and event venues. This support has been greatly appreciated because Thurmont is a small rural municipality that is sometimes forgotten in the big picture. We support MHAA and their mission to keep the authentic heritage of Maryland alive for generations to come. Our town is becoming a destination, and these funds have made it possible to contribute more aesthetically pleasing surroundings to our residents and visitors alike.

For FY26, we are requesting MHAA grant support for continuation of a loop trail from Thurmont Community Park to Catoclin Mountain Park.

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. Please support SB2980/HB1327, which will make way for up to \$12 million in POS funds to be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.

For the sake of all Marylanders, I hope you will support SB0980/HB1327.

Best,  
Vickie Grinder

Town of Thurmont  
Economic and Community Development Manager

# **MDP SB 980 Written Informational Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andrew Wilson

Position: INFO



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## Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

**HEARING DATE:** March 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM

**BILL NO:** SB 980

**COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation

**POSITION:** Informational

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Wilson (443) 721-6789

---

**TITLE:** Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants

**BILL ANALYSIS:**

SB 980 increases the maximum amount of Program Open Space funds that may be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Financing Fund from \$6 million to a total of \$12 million annually, establishes a per project grant award amount of up to \$300,000, and reduces matching funds required for grants from 50% to 20% of total project costs. The bill also eliminates the provision that up to \$300,000 of funds in the Maryland Heritage Areas Financing Fund may be distributed to the Maryland Historical Trust to be awarded as non-capital historic preservation grants and reduce the amount of funding that may be used to pay the operating expenses of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority from up to 10% to up to 7%.

**POSITION AND RATIONALE:**

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) is providing informational testimony specific to the bill's impacts to the Department and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). Of note, MDP concurs with the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) testimony that the allocation of more POS funds to MHAA could result in decreased funding for their land conservation, recreation, capital development, and maintenance programs. Regarding the impacts to MDP and MHT specifically, as written this bill could create staffing shortages within MHT as the proposed percentage allowed to pay for operations may not cover its actual cost. If this bill moves forward than amendments should be considered to ensure the percentage for operating costs equals 7% of the overall MHAA appropriation or \$600,000, whichever is greater. This would allow MHT to continue its critical staffing support of MHAA regardless of its appropriation amount.

## MHAA Operations

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority provides targeted financial and technical assistance, in the form of grants and loans, to organizations and agencies located within certified heritage areas. There are 13 certified heritage areas and approximately 300 active grants per year. The 10% in operating expenses that the Authority is currently permitted to transfer to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority from Program Open Space funds provides the minimum amount needed to administer these activities which are completed by dedicated staff at the Maryland Historical Trust, an agency within the Maryland Department of Planning.

At the current \$6 million appropriation, the Authority receives \$600,000 for direct operating costs, which supports three dedicated MHAA programmatic positions, partial funding of two fiscal-side grant manager positions, as well as other costs such as partial support for outreach staff, grant lifecycle management software, travel, meeting costs, and other expenses necessary for effective program administration, including hiring consultants to perform third party studies or to assist in program evaluation and/or strategic planning. The current allocation does not cover all indirect costs for the program, including HR, IT, fiscal, and legal staff support, office space, etc., which are supported by the Maryland Department of Planning.

For the administrative activities of the Authority to continue, it is critical that operating funds not drop below the current amount of \$600,000 while the appropriation is \$6 million or more. If the appropriation is increased to \$12 million the number of grants awarded will double and the staff would need to increase as well. If funding for operating goes below these amounts, then staffing would be negatively affected and become unstable, which would impact the agency's ability to responsibly administer the program. In addition, fluctuations in operational funding from year to year could also impact the Authority's ability to afford grants lifecycle management software, third-party consultant studies and evaluations of program effectiveness, and other basic requirements like travel, equipment, etc.

MDP urges the consideration of amendments to SB 980 that would ensure adequate annual operating expenses that align with possible changes to the overall appropriation so the activities of the Authority can effectively be administered to grantees and heritage areas.

## Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program

The MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program supports historic resource survey, documentation, and evaluation activities that serve as the foundation for the protection and development of historic resources; are vitally important to local and statewide comprehensive planning and community revitalization efforts; and ensure that developers and project planners can more easily comply with federal, State and local laws, leading to more streamlined project review and avoidance of costly delays.

Importantly, this program funding supports the identification of underrepresented histories and themes and sites that need new or additional research to meet today's standards. This data informs decision making about how and where to target local, state, and federal resources to promote environmental justice by ensuring that cultural resources associated with marginalized communities are not overlooked in state and federal environmental review processes. This ensures these resources are promoted as valuable heritage tourism assets and are recognized as important place making anchors in existing communities. There are no other funding sources that

duplicate the role that Non-Capital Historic Preservation grants play in Maryland, and so MDP is opposed to the proposed amendment that would see the elimination of this funding source. However, MDP understands that this funding being diverted from the MHAA appropriation is not ideal.

We recommend the Committee considers alternative modes of funding for MHT Non-Capital grants that would provide level funding for the program at \$300,000 annually. This would ensure continued support for historic site documentation and designation projects aimed at telling an inclusive story about Maryland history. Without this change, the bill as written would cause the MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program to become unfunded and inactive.



# **MDP SB 980 Written Informational Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Hughes

Position: INFO



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## Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

**HEARING DATE:** March 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM

**BILL NO:** SB 980

**COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation

**POSITION:** Informational

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Wilson (443) 721-6789

---

**TITLE:** Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grants

**BILL ANALYSIS:**

SB 980 increases the maximum amount of Program Open Space funds that may be transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Financing Fund from \$6 million to a total of \$12 million annually, establishes a per project grant award amount of up to \$300,000, and reduces matching funds required for grants from 50% to 20% of total project costs. The bill also eliminates the provision that up to \$300,000 of funds in the Maryland Heritage Areas Financing Fund may be distributed to the Maryland Historical Trust to be awarded as non-capital historic preservation grants and reduce the amount of funding that may be used to pay the operating expenses of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority from up to 10% to up to 7%.

**POSITION AND RATIONALE:**

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) is providing informational testimony specific to the bill's impacts to the Department and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). Of note, MDP concurs with the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) testimony that the allocation of more POS funds to MHAA could result in decreased funding for their land conservation, recreation, capital development, and maintenance programs. Regarding the impacts to MDP and MHT specifically, as written this bill could create staffing shortages within MHT as the proposed percentage allowed to pay for operations may not cover its actual cost. If this bill moves forward than amendments should be considered to ensure the percentage for operating costs equals 7% of the overall MHAA appropriation or \$600,000, whichever is greater. This would allow MHT to continue its critical staffing support of MHAA regardless of its appropriation amount.

## MHAA Operations

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority provides targeted financial and technical assistance, in the form of grants and loans, to organizations and agencies located within certified heritage areas. There are 13 certified heritage areas and approximately 300 active grants per year. The 10% in operating expenses that the Authority is currently permitted to transfer to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority from Program Open Space funds provides the minimum amount needed to administer these activities which are completed by dedicated staff at the Maryland Historical Trust, an agency within the Maryland Department of Planning.

At the current \$6 million appropriation, the Authority receives \$600,000 for direct operating costs, which supports three dedicated MHAA programmatic positions, partial funding of two fiscal-side grant manager positions, as well as other costs such as partial support for outreach staff, grant lifecycle management software, travel, meeting costs, and other expenses necessary for effective program administration, including hiring consultants to perform third party studies or to assist in program evaluation and/or strategic planning. The current allocation does not cover all indirect costs for the program, including HR, IT, fiscal, and legal staff support, office space, etc., which are supported by the Maryland Department of Planning.

For the administrative activities of the Authority to continue, it is critical that operating funds not drop below the current amount of \$600,000 while the appropriation is \$6 million or more. If the appropriation is increased to \$12 million the number of grants awarded will double and the staff would need to increase as well. If funding for operating goes below these amounts, then staffing would be negatively affected and become unstable, which would impact the agency's ability to responsibly administer the program. In addition, fluctuations in operational funding from year to year could also impact the Authority's ability to afford grants lifecycle management software, third-party consultant studies and evaluations of program effectiveness, and other basic requirements like travel, equipment, etc.

MDP urges the consideration of amendments to SB 980 that would ensure adequate annual operating expenses that align with possible changes to the overall appropriation so the activities of the Authority can effectively be administered to grantees and heritage areas.

## Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program

The MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program supports historic resource survey, documentation, and evaluation activities that serve as the foundation for the protection and development of historic resources; are vitally important to local and statewide comprehensive planning and community revitalization efforts; and ensure that developers and project planners can more easily comply with federal, State and local laws, leading to more streamlined project review and avoidance of costly delays.

Importantly, this program funding supports the identification of underrepresented histories and themes and sites that need new or additional research to meet today's standards. This data informs decision making about how and where to target local, state, and federal resources to promote environmental justice by ensuring that cultural resources associated with marginalized communities are not overlooked in state and federal environmental review processes. This ensures these resources are promoted as valuable heritage tourism assets and are recognized as important place making anchors in existing communities. There are no other funding sources that

duplicate the role that Non-Capital Historic Preservation grants play in Maryland, and so MDP is opposed to the proposed amendment that would see the elimination of this funding source. However, MDP understands that this funding being diverted from the MHAA appropriation is not ideal.

We recommend the Committee considers alternative modes of funding for MHT Non-Capital grants that would provide level funding for the program at \$300,000 annually. This would ensure continued support for historic site documentation and designation projects aimed at telling an inclusive story about Maryland history. Without this change, the bill as written would cause the MHT Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program to become unfunded and inactive.

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Position: INFO



## Senate Bill 980

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

MACo Position:

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

### **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Date: March 4, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) offers the following **LETTER OF INFORMATION** on SB 980 for the Committee's consideration. SB 980 seeks to expand the ability of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to award grants and loans for managing certified heritage areas while also adjusting the funding allocation structure within the Program Open Space (POS) framework.

Since its inception in 1969, POS has enabled the State of Maryland and its counties to expand public access to recreational spaces and natural areas, delivering immense health and economic benefits to communities across the state. A previous introduction of the bill, which has since been withdrawn, would have redirected POS funds before the established state/county split, inadvertently affecting both state and local POS dollars. This shift could have disproportionately impacted medium and smaller counties, limiting their access to vital recreation and conservation funds.

MACo appreciates the willingness of the bill's sponsor to work with counties to address these concerns. The bill has since been drafted to ensure that it does not affect local POS funding, maintaining the existing balance in POS allocations. Counties value the role of heritage areas in preserving Maryland's cultural and historical assets and welcome efforts to enhance their sustainability—so long as such efforts do not inadvertently reduce dedicated resources for local parks and open spaces.

MACo thanks the sponsor and the Committee for their consideration of local priorities in this matter. Counties have no position on the underlying fundamentals on SB 980, but appreciate the Committee's consideration of the information outlined above.