



February 7, 2025

Chair Feldman & Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for Senate Bill 477 – Port of Deposit State Historical Park

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 477, which refines the size and scope of the Port of Deposit State Historical Park and ensures that preservation efforts remain focused, effective, and sustainable. As the President of Community Connecting Us (CCU), a board member of the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation, and a community partner of the Town of Port Deposit, I have seen firsthand how locally driven preservation efforts have successfully protected and revitalized our town's historic and cultural assets.

SB-477 strengthens preservation efforts by allowing the Department of Natural Resources to dedicate resources to the Snow Hill Archaeological Site, a pre-Civil War free Black community of historical and cultural significance, while ensuring the Town of Port Deposit and the Bainbridge Development Corporation continue their work to stabilize, restore, and repurpose the Tome School campus into an integrated historic, recreational, and cultural experience.

SB-477 is Essential to our community for the following reasons:

Preservation in Action – The Town has a proven track record of restoring historic sites, including the Tome Gas House (now home to the Towson Map Turtle program) and the Tome Mansion garden, and supporting historic homeowners through façade grants. This bill ensures these successful local efforts continue.

Financial Responsibility – The Town of Port Deposit has access to funding the State does not currently have, allowing for faster, community-driven restoration while ensuring the state can focus its resources effectively.

Broad Local & State Support – SB-477 is not about outside developers; it was written by local Senators Gallion and Hershey and is supported by five of six Cecil County delegates, county and town officials, the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation, the Bainbridge Development Corporation.

Alignment with Long-Term Planning – This bill aligns with multiple regional and state conservation and heritage initiatives, including:

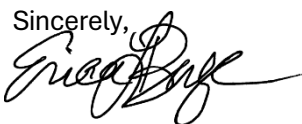
- The Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway Plan
- The Sustainable Communities Plan
- The Concept Plan for the Restoration of the Tome School Campus & Snow Hill Archaeological Site

SB-477 ensures that local preservation efforts can move forward efficiently, protecting both our historic and natural resources while honoring the past and creating a lasting legacy for future generations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 477.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Erica Berge
President, Community Connecting Us