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To: Chair Senator Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee
From: Cecil County Executive Adam Streight
Date: February 11, 2025
Subject: Support for SB 477

As County Executive, Cecil County Government stands with the Town of Port Deposit and the Bainbridge Development Corporation (BDC) in supporting SB 477 for the following reasons:

First, the amendment to the Great Maryland Outdoors Act (SB 541) regarding Snow Hill was introduced hastily, without input or knowledge from the BDC, the town, or the Cecil County Delegation—until it was too late. These stakeholders were not consulted and do not support the amendment as written due to the hardships it creates, including the loss of viable economic development opportunities and the infringement on a municipality's sovereignty within its own borders. Additionally, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has made it clear that it lacks the resources to develop or maintain this park, meaning the land will likely sit unused indefinitely. There is no precedent for a state park being created without the consent, input, or participation of the property owners, local jurisdiction, or county delegation. Good governance requires listening to the entire community and working collaboratively toward a common goal that serves all interests.

Second, SB 477 aligns with the original intent of recognizing Snow Hill as a historically significant site commemorating Black American history in Port Deposit. Downsizing the park makes it more financially feasible for DNR to maintain, especially in challenging fiscal times. It also allows the BDC, the Town, Cecil County, the Department of Commerce, and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to coordinate efforts toward a viable plan that leverages the site's location, history, connection to downtown, and recreational potential. Ultimately, SB 477 **restores local government's authority over land within its jurisdiction.**

Third, local government must support business and economic development initiatives that generate revenue and create well-paying jobs across most of the Bainbridge property. Reducing the park to a manageable size enables the BDC and the Town of Port Deposit, along with their partners, to secure resources for transforming historic buildings and open space into valuable community assets. This approach enhances the property's recreational, educational, and historic significance. Dormant and inaccessible land benefits no one—SB 477 provides a balanced solution, ensuring the park's cultural and environmental assets thrive alongside responsible heritage tourism and recreational development.

In conclusion, SB 477 offers the best of both worlds, and Cecil County Government stands with our partners in local government, the BDC, and the community in full support.