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TESTIMONY TO HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Name: Brooke Kidd

Organization: World Arts Focus dba Joe's Movement Emporium

Issue: **SUPPORT HB1327 (SB0980)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Date: March 3, 2025

World Arts Focus dba Joe's Movement Emporium 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.

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.

Joe's Movement Emporium has benefited from this program by supporting capital investments and program support that drive local economy and cultural tourism.

The \$6 million gap in funding each year stalls high-impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow increased investment where it's 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 know it's a difficult budget year, but these investments generate direct and indirect economic impacts. It should not be the practice to leave grant funding levels flat year after year.

Respectfully submitted,

Brooke Kidd,
Executive Director