



Testimony in Favor of House Bill 469

Local Government – Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitors Bureau Designation

To: The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

Written testimony from: Kristen Pironis
Chief Executive Officer, Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
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Date: February 24, 2025

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County wholeheartedly endorses and is in support of the proposed House Bill 469 (HB469) to officially change the title of our organization from “Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitor’s Bureau” to “Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County.”

As a nonprofit, partnership-focused destination marketing and management organization, VAAAC’s mission is to foster a welcoming destination and promote tourism on behalf of our visitors, partners, and community through inclusivity, stewardship, and audacity. VAAAC’s efforts are guided by four core priorities: to cultivate and lead a diverse and inclusive hospitality and tourism community; to collaborate with partners across the destination; to drive prosperity and sustainability; and to strengthen organizational capacity.

Founded in 1982 as the Tourism Council of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (TCAAAC), a non-profit affiliate of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Annapolis, the County Council passed a resolution recognizing TCAAAC as the official tourism arm of Anne Arundel County. In 1990, the organization was officially incorporated and rebranded to Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitor’s Bureau; and with exponential growth over the course of 26 years, the organization evolved to its present and official name: Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County. That tremendous growth resulted in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County boasting a \$4.1 billion tourism economy, welcoming more than 6.8 million visitors in 2023 (Source: Tourism Economics). And this year Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County celebrates 35 years as the official tourism office.

Proudly sitting in the heart of Annapolis, VAAAC welcomes more than 85,000 visitors on average each year into the Visitor’s Center at 26 West Street, located just a few steps away from the Maryland State House. And later this year, we will open a footprint for tourism at BWI Marshall Airport. We work year-round to promote both Annapolis and Anne Arundel County as premier travel destinations by highlighting the numerous unique events and thriving businesses of our surrounding community. That support is reflected in the 26,000 visitor-supported jobs in Anne Arundel County in 2023, in which the tourism industry led the county in job growth and accounted for 10 percent of all jobs within the county (Source: Tourism Economics).

We are grateful for your ongoing support of a thriving tourism industry, and we appreciate the update and clarification provided by the proposed HB469.

Sincerely,

Kristen Pironis
Chief Executive Officer
Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County