

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

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.