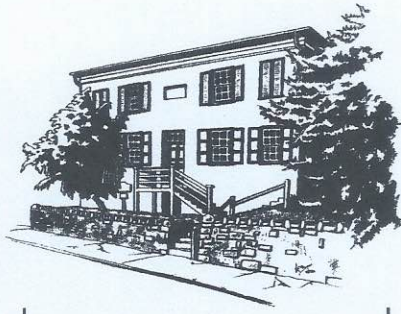




Port Deposit Heritage Corporation

98 N. Main St., Port Deposit, MD 21904

February 25, 2025

PAW PAW MUSEUM CIRCA 1821

Open
May ~ October
2nd and 4th Sunday
1 ~ 5 p.m.

98 North Main Street
Historic Port Deposit

Contact us at
PawPawMuseum@gmail.com

~
Mailing Address
PO Box 101
Port Deposit, MD 21904

OFFICERS
Kathleen Shilko
President

William Baron
Vice-President

JoAnne Bierly
Secretary-Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Brian Berge
Erica Berge
Anne Gibson
Stephanie Gibson
Robert Kline
Joseph Lafferty

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

H. Teresa Bittner
Margaret Jackson
Michael Miklas

President Emeritus
Rebecca Hipkins Guerrero
Grace Humphries
Judy Leonard
George Maldeis

Vice-President Emeritus
Rev. George Hipkins

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for Senate Bill 477

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation (PDHC), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 1184, which ensures that the Port of Deposit State Historical Park can move forward in a focused, well-resourced approach to historic preservation.

For years, PDHC has been at the forefront of historic preservation in Port Deposit, successfully rescuing and restoring abandoned historic buildings that are now thriving assets in our community. Our work has proven that local stewardship is the key to successful preservation and adaptive reuse.

Commitment to Preserving Black History in Port Deposit

We are particularly excited about partnering with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to connect and expand the narratives of Port Deposit's Black history—from the Snow Hill Archaeological Site to the Underground Railroad connections in town, to Freeman Hall, the segregated Black primary school that served our Port Deposit community until the mid-20th century.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to weave these stories together into a comprehensive historical and cultural experience. We look forward to working with DNR, historians, and local stakeholders to ensure that the legacy of Port Deposit's Black community is fully honored and preserved.

Our Continued Commitment to Preservation

PDHC has a long track record of working with the town on historic preservation and adaptive reuse in Port Deposit. Our successes include:

- Rescuing and restoring abandoned historic buildings that now serve the community.
- Collaborating with local and state partners to secure funding and expertise for restoration efforts.

With HB-1184, we are eager to continue this tradition by supporting the Bainbridge Development Center and the Town of Port Deposit in its efforts to stabilize and repurpose the Tome School campus. The Town has already demonstrated its commitment to historic preservation, and we stand ready to collaborate in ensuring that this landmark remains a community treasure.

This legislation allows the State and the Town to each play to their strengths:

- DNR can focus on Snow Hill and its incredible archaeological significance.
- The Town, with partners like PDHC, can restore and interpret the Tome School campus with available funding.
- Together, we can create an integrated historic, cultural, and educational experience that enriches Maryland's heritage.

For these reasons, the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation strongly supports HB-1184 and urges a favorable report from this committee. We look forward to working with DNR, the Town of Port Deposit, and other community partners to ensure that our rich and diverse history is preserved for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or opportunities for collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Baron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Baron
Vice President, Port Deposit Heritage Corporation