



Testimony to: House Appropriations Committee
Transportation and the Environment Subcommittee

Name: Elizabeth Scott Shatto, Executive Director *Elizabeth Scott Shatto*
Organization: Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA)
Issue: HB1181
Position: Favorable

Friday, February 26, 2025

House Bill 1181, sponsored by Washington County Delegate Terry Baker calls for a Task Force on the Establishment of a State Park Dedicated to Veterans' Care to study issues and estimate costs related to the establishment of a State Park dedicated to providing recreational opportunities and therapeutic services to veterans; and requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations on or before December 1, 2026.

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, serving heritage tourism in Frederick, Washington and Carroll Counties, is interested in this project as veterans are a key audience for the Civil War era resources that we work with partners to preserve and interpret. A Veteran's Care state park would offer ample opportunities for creative partnerships and increased ROI in terms of the tourism aspect of our heritage area focus. Our area is unique in its concentration of sites that remind all visitors, and especially veterans, of the meaning of freedom as protected and preserved by our military. The potential for our heritage area to contribute to the mission of the proposed state park is great.

The feasibility study proposed by HB 1181 is an important first step towards a Veteran's Care State Park. The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area will partner with the Hagerstown/Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and others to welcome those who come to such a park for healing, recreation, and the transformative experience that our locale offers.

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