



Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc.
Prince George's County, Maryland
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Monday, March 3, 2025

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Meagan Baco, Executive Director

Organization: Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc.

Issue: **SUPPORT HB1327 (SB0980)**

Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority - Funding and Grants

Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc., the nonprofit management entity of the state-certified Heritage Area in Prince George's County is in strong support of HB1327 that will invest in heritage tourism for economic development and cultural understanding across Maryland.

If passed, HB1327 will allow the Maryland Heritage Areas Program to receive up to \$12M of Program Open Space funding, lifting the current cap from the insufficient current allocation of \$6M. There is a \$6M+ gap in funding each year between excellent grant applications and available grant funds, stalling high-impact locally-based economic development projects.

Considering the circumstance of Maryland's budget, it is important to note that this legislation does not guarantee funding but allows for this important program to receive a greater share of Program Open Space funding from the state's transfer tax, when it should become available.

Cultural tourism is a part of the solution to Maryland's budget shortfalls and especially here in Prince George's with our proximity to the District and our world class cultural attractions, miles of connected towns and trails, and welcoming and diverse local ambassadors.

The Maryland Heritage Areas Program contributes a combined total of \$2.4 billion to the Maryland economy and generates \$319.8 million in economic impact. For every \$1 Maryland invests in the Heritage Areas Program, it gets \$7 back and 40,000 jobs are supported.

HB1327 is needed now to make a pathway towards funding cultural tourism at the valuation that it deserves—heritage tourists stay longer and spend more at local businesses— and Maryland has the historic, cultural, and natural assets that visitors seek out to experience.

Respectfully,

Meagan Baco, Executive Director
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