

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of House Bill 1184. My name is Bill Baron. I am a resident of Port Deposit, Vice President of the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation, and Chair of the Port Deposit Planning Commission.

On behalf of the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation, I want to express our strong support for HB 1184, ensuring the Port of Deposit State Historical Park moves forward with a focused, well-resourced approach to tell the Black American Experience in Port Deposit.

For years, The PDHC has curated, preserved, and shared the history of Port Deposit at the Paw Paw Museum. We have led historic preservation efforts—rescuing and restoring abandoned buildings that now serve our community, proving that local stewardship is key to successful preservation and adaptive reuse.

We are eager to partner with the Department of Natural Resources to connect and expand Port Deposit's Black history—from the Free Black Community at Snow Hill, to the Underground Railroad connections, to Freeman Hall, the town's segregated Black primary school built as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1937.

The PDHC is also committed to supporting the Town of Port Deposit in restoring and interpreting the local Tome Campus history.

Together, the DNR, the Town of Port Deposit, and the PDHC will create an incredible heritage tourism collaboration for everyone to enjoy in Port Deposit and Maryland.

The Port Deposit Heritage Corporation strongly supports HB 1184, and we urge a favorable report from this committee.

Thank you for your consideration.