



February 28, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairwoman
House Ways and Means Committee

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee

Re: House Bill 498 - Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

Position: *Information*

Chairwoman Atterbeary and Chairman Barnes:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (MDMO), I am writing to provide informational testimony for House Bill 498 - Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act.

Tourism is an economic ecosystem, delivering opportunity and quality of life for Marylanders that is derived from visitor spending. The travel sector is an integral part of Maryland's economy that contributes over **\$2 billion** in state and local tax revenues a year. In 2023, the state welcomed **45.1 million** visitors, who spent more than **\$20.5 billion** at local food and beverage establishments, lodging, cultural attractions, recreational sites, and retail stores. These tourist destinations contributed to the employment of **190,660** individuals.

Under House Bill 498, the Commerce Secretary is authorized to create a list of target industry sectors that are eligible for incentive programs. Given the significant economic impact of tourism in the State, we respectfully request that the tourism sector be considered on the list of those eligible for future incentive programs.

The tourism industry is fully committed to Maryland's economic prosperity and growth. We appreciate the intent of this legislation to reinvigorate the State's approach to economic development, and support of many of its provisions. Thank you for your consideration of our informational testimony on House Bill 498.

Respectfully submitted,


Cassandra M. Vanhooser, Chairwoman

Maryland Association of Destination Marketing Organizations