



HERITAGE GREENWAY P. O. Box 96, Ellicott City, Maryland 21041 | [info@patapsco.org](mailto:info@patapsco.org) | [www.patapsco.org](http://www.patapsco.org)

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TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Name: Kyla Cools, PhD

Organization: Patapsco Heritage Greenway

Issue: **FAVORABLE SB0638 (HB0654)**

**Natural Resources - Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) - Funding and Grants**

My name is Kyla Cools and I am the heritage program manager for Patapsco Heritage Greenway (PHG), which serves as the heritage area management entity for the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area (PVHA) in Howard and Baltimore County. Our mission is to preserve, protect, interpret and restore the environment, history and culture of the Patapsco River Valley for all. Working with our partners, we have brought increased vitality to heritage tourism activities, enhancing the visitor experience and driving interest in local businesses. MHAA grants, along with PHG's technical assistance and marketing, have supported a wide range of projects in the PVHA, a few of which I'll briefly note.

The Howard County Courthouse exhibit will contribute to the interpretive landscape of the new Capitoline Center, scheduled to open this weekend in Ellicott City's former courthouse. Preservation Maryland's Ellicott City Jail rehabilitation will create a new Center for Climate and Heritage while exploring the site's complex history. Grants to Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park have supported interpretive signage in the Avalon area, the highly successful Mobile Visitor Center, and trail and wayfinding enhancements that improve visitor access to outdoor recreation and historic sites. Ellicott City's Historic District Partnership expanded its Main Street visitor experiences and the Howard County Tourism Council undertook a substantial interior renovation and exhibit overhaul of its Historic Post Office visitor center. Farther from Ellicott City, grants have contributed to Howard County Conservancy's new signage and exhibits, supported unique performances, and ensured the adaptive reuse of historic structures. Smaller grants have brought innovative programming and exhibits to the Elkridge Heritage Society, Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Howard County Center for African American Culture, and Howard County Historical Society.

During the industrial era, one encountered textile, paper and grist mills, iron furnaces, and more dotting the Patapsco River's banks and supporting the growth of Ellicott's Mills and Elk Ridge Landing. Today, our visitors encounter the river flowing past former mill buildings that have been preserved and adaptively reused, experience historic Main Streets in places like Ellicott City, Elkridge, and Catonsville, and hike and bike along the ruins of mill villages fading back into protected green spaces in Patapsco Valley State Park.

Funding through the state heritage area program has been crucial to this effort and is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, supporting unique place-making that helps anchor communities and attract visitors. Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to the people of Maryland.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kyla Cools*

Kyla Cools, PhD, Heritage Program Manager

*PATAPSCO HERITAGE GREENWAY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to preserve, protect, interpret, & restore the environment, history, and culture of the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area.*