



Testimony: SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

From: Christopher Stapleton, CEO, Simiosys, 1706 Dahlgren Road, Middletown MD, 21769, (407) 697-0381

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to show my support of Maryland's Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) programs and services. They have shown such successful collaboration between the State's agencies, programs as well as building synergy between commercial, civic and academic sectors of the state.

I am speaking as a citizen, educator and small business owner. The MHAA is one of the reasons that I am moving my global enterprise to Maryland. I look forward to applying a career of multiple international awards, in pioneering innovation (2025 IEEE Test of Time Award), over a dozen cultural heritage tourism awards (Amusement Business Golden Tickets), and numerous Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Awards. (DoEd, DoD, etc.).

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) program is a powerful contributor to Maryland's economy. SB 638 and HB 654 will pave the way for even greater return on MHAA investment. By "lifting the cap" on this unique program, the state will be positioned to harness the economic potential of Maryland's heritage areas in future years. These bills represent an important step forward for the State of Maryland and for the residents of Carroll, Frederick and Washington counties who are served by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

The MHAA is not funded through the general fund; it is funded through Program Open Space (property transfer tax). MHAA funding is a restricted line within Program Open Space funding and is *not part of the Program Open Space formula*.

Current law allows "up to" \$6 million allocated statewide for this program. Over \$5.1 million goes directly back to our communities by way of grants for economic stimulus. Returning on that investment is a remarkable \$7 for every \$1 of state funding. There are far more requests for funding than this program can provide at its current level. This year alone, the grant requests are for over \$12 million, projects and services that will stimulate tourism spending, sustain and support jobs, and generate state and local taxes.

The significant impact of the current funding levels can be seen in Maryland's museums, parks, trails, towns, cities, main streets, forests, waterways, and more. We



are presently able to bring multiple local and national organizations support for future project grant applications because of this. There is no fiscal mandate associated with this legislation. The language is careful to state “may” and “up to” rather than “shall.” This is important, as the bill sponsors are aware of current budgetary constraints both for the general fund and for Program Open Space funds. **This is a legislative adjustment to a capped program to allow for future growth and is not a current funding request.**

Simiosys, LLC recognizes the thoughtful intent behind this legislation and believes its passage will result in meaningful and positive outcomes for our State. We are confident that these bills strike an appropriate balance between recognizing current budget constraints and providing an avenue for future growth, thus reinforcing Maryland’s commitment to effective governance and responsible stewardship.

For these reasons, Simiosys, LLC respectfully urges favorable consideration and passage of **SB 638 and HB 654** during the current legislative session.

Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to the people of Maryland.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Stapleton".

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