



February 27, 2026

Maryland House of Delegates
Economic Matters Committee
Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB0506 - Economic Development - Transformational Project Financing Program – Establishment – FAVORABLE SUPPORT

Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC). MTC is a statewide trade association representing businesses and organizations across every sector of Maryland’s tourism industry. Our mission is to support tourism-related enterprises through education, collaboration, and advocacy. We respectfully submit this informational letter in regard to HB 1473 and request that the bill be amended to explicitly include **tourism** among the identified industries targeted for economic development support.

Tourism Is a Core Economic Driver in Maryland

Tourism is not a peripheral industry in Maryland — it is a foundational economic sector that:

- Generates billions in annual visitor spending
- Supports tens of thousands of jobs across urban, suburban, and rural communities
- Produces significant state and local tax revenues
- Sustains small and minority-owned businesses throughout the State

Unlike many industries that are geographically concentrated, tourism delivers economic benefits to **all 24 jurisdictions** — from mountain and outdoor recreation in Western Maryland to heritage tourism in Southern Maryland, maritime tourism on the Eastern Shore, and cultural and sports tourism in Central Maryland.

Given its statewide impact, tourism merits formal recognition alongside other industries targeted for strategic economic investment.



Tourism Is Economic Development

Economic development policy traditionally focuses on sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and life sciences. However, tourism functions as:

- An **export industry** (bringing outside dollars into Maryland)
- A **small business incubator** (restaurants, tour operators, boutique hotels, cultural venues)
- A **talent attraction tool** (quality of place influences workforce decisions)
- A **catalyst for infrastructure and revitalization investments**

When the State invests in tourism infrastructure, marketing, workforce development, and destination enhancement, it generates measurable return on investment through increased visitor spending and tax receipts.

Including tourism in HB 1473 ensures that economic development tools created or expanded under the bill can be leveraged to:

- Support destination infrastructure projects
- Enhance visitor-serving districts
- Strengthen cultural and heritage assets
- Expand sports and event tourism capacity
- Assist rural communities dependent on seasonal visitation

Supporting Rural and Underserved Communities

Tourism is often the primary private-sector economic engine in rural Maryland. In many counties, visitor spending supports:

- Family-owned lodging properties
- Local restaurants and retailers
- Outdoor recreation outfitters
- Agritourism operations



- Cultural and historic sites

By including tourism among the bill's targeted industries, the General Assembly would ensure that rural jurisdictions have equitable access to economic development tools and resources created under HB 1473.

Resilience and Long-Term Growth

The tourism sector has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in recent years. However, it remains highly competitive, with neighboring states making aggressive investments in destination development and promotion.

Explicitly including tourism in HB 1473 would:

- Strengthen Maryland's competitive position
- Encourage public-private partnerships
- Support workforce development in hospitality and events
- Expand Maryland's national and international visibility

Tourism is uniquely positioned to deliver immediate economic impact while also contributing to long-term place-making and community vitality.

Requested Amendment

The Maryland Tourism Coalition respectfully requests that HB 1473 be amended to:

Add "tourism and hospitality" to the list of industries identified for targeted economic development support under the bill.

This inclusion would ensure clarity of legislative intent and provide certainty that tourism-related projects and initiatives qualify under the programmatic framework established by HB 1473.

Conclusion

Tourism is one of Maryland's most inclusive, geographically diverse, and revenue-generating industries. It supports small businesses, strengthens communities, and drives tax revenues that fund essential public services.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to adopt an amendment including tourism as a targeted industry in HB 1473 and to give the bill a favorable report as amended.



**MARYLAND
TOURISM
COALITION**

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of Maryland's tourism economy.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Libber
Legislative Chair
Maryland Tourism Coalition