



# THE COMMISSIONERS OF THURMONT

615 East Main Street  
11 Water Street  
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**Testimony:** SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**From:** Vickie Grinder, 11 Water Street, Thurmont, MD 21788,  
vgrinder@thurmontstaff.com,  
(c) 227-267-3554. (o) 301-271-7313 ext. 218

The Maryland Heritage 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 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. Thanks to this funding, Thurmont has been able to add four gateway signs welcoming visitors and residents at all four gateway entrances in our town. We have also benefited from MHA funds for wayfaring signs throughout the town which identify key attractions.


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.**

The town of Thurmont 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, the town of Thurmont 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.

Best,



Vickie Grinder  
Economic Development Manager  
Town of Thurmont

**Testimony:** SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**From:** Elizabeth Cannon

Secretary, Rose Hill Manor Museum Council

1611 N. Market St.

Frederick, MD 21701

[rosehillmuseumcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:rosehillmuseumcouncil@gmail.com), 301-801-5528

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.

For example, the Rose Hill Manor Museum Council is applying for an MHAA capital grant to restore a historic horse-drawn hearse that is part of the largest public collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century carriages in the region. The collection will be moving to a newly constructed 6,000 sq. ft. museum in the fall of 2026. Located on the grounds of the manor home of Maryland's first elected governor, Thomas Johnson, the new Rose Hill Carriage Museum will provide state-of-the-art preservation for the collection and an enhanced educational experience. The Museum draws thousands of visitors to Frederick each year, from regional sightseers to organized tours to local families and school groups.

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.**

The Rose Hill Manor Museum Council 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, the Rose Hill Manor Museum Council 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.

# TOWN OF KEEDYSVILLE, MARYLAND

*“Where Northern Thrift and Personality Blend with Southern Charm and Hospitality”*

P.O. Box 359  
19 South Main Street  
Keedysville, MD 21756  
301-432-5795  
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*Ken Lord, Mayor*  
*Brandon Sweeney, Assistant Mayor*  
*Judy Kerns, Council*  
*Matt Hull, Council*  
*Sarah Baker, Council*

Testimony: SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

From: Town of Keedysville  
19 S Main St, Keedysville, MD 21756  
townhall@keedysvillemd.com  
301-432-5795

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) program is a powerful contributor to Maryland’s economy and to the vitality of small municipalities like the Town of Keedysville. 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 full economic and community development potential of Maryland’s heritage areas in the years ahead. These bills represent an important step forward for the State of Maryland and for the residents of Washington County served by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

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

Current law allows up to \$6 million allocated statewide for this program. More than \$5.1 million goes directly back into communities in the form of grants that stimulate local economies. The return on investment is remarkable — \$7 for every \$1 of State funding. Yet there are far more requests for funding than the program can support at its current level. This year alone, grant requests exceed \$12 million for projects and services that stimulate tourism spending, sustain and create jobs, and generate State and local tax revenue.

The impact of MHAA funding can be clearly seen in towns like Keedysville. The Town is currently utilizing MHAA grant funds to help pay for new, historically accurate slate roof, gutters, and downspouts for the historic Mt. Vernon Reformed Church, located at 64 South Main Street. This Civil War landmark structure is an important part of our community’s architectural and cultural heritage. The preservation of this historic church not only safeguards a treasured local asset, but also supports heritage tourism, enhances the character of our Main Street corridor, and contributes to the overall economic vitality of our town. Without MHAA support, projects like this would be significantly more difficult — if not impossible — for small municipalities to undertake.

There is no fiscal mandate associated with this legislation. The language is careful to state “may” and “up to” rather than “shall.” This distinction is important, as the bill sponsors are mindful of current budgetary constraints affecting both the general fund and Program Open Space. This legislation simply adjusts the cap to allow for future growth; it does not constitute a current funding request.

The Town of Keedysville recognizes the thoughtful intent behind this legislation and believes its passage will result in meaningful and positive outcomes for communities across Maryland. These bills strike an appropriate balance between acknowledging present fiscal realities and providing a pathway for future growth, reinforcing Maryland’s commitment to responsible stewardship of its historic and cultural resources.

For these reasons, the Town of Keedysville 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.



## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

ZONING | PLAN REVIEW | COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING | LAND PRESERVATION | FOREST CONSERVATION | GIS

**Testimony:** SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**From:** Meghan Jenkins  
GIS Coordinator/Historic Preservation Planner  
Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning  
747 Northern Avenue  
Hagerstown, MD 21742  
Phone: 240-313-2439  
Email: [mjenkins@washco-md.net](mailto:mjenkins@washco-md.net)

I am writing as a member of the Advisory Council of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, and also as a planner working with the Washington County Historic District Commission.

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 Maryland Heritage Area Authority is not funded through the general fund; it is funded through Program Open Space (property transfer tax). The Maryland Heritage Area 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. The heritage area has provided valuable technical support for our County on numerous occasions regarding historic resources and their protections. Heritage area projects support our local communities and drive tourism and economic development across the entire County which is vital. Our jurisdiction has benefited from this program through a wide range of projects including building preservation

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[WWW.WASHCO-MD.NET](http://WWW.WASHCO-MD.NET)

such as the Saylor House, exhibit creation such as the National Road Museum and plans for future visitor experiences such as those at the Hagerstown Aviation Museum. All of these projects and many more each year provide citizens with valuable cultural experiences, educational programming, and place-based experiences. I look forward to grant applications each year to see the hard work of all the organizations that contribute to the heritage area.

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.**

I recognize 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, I respectfully urge favorable consideration and passage of **SB 638 and HB 654** during the current legislative session.

**Testimony:** SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Position: FAVORABLE**

**From:**

Tracey McIntire  
8907 Crystal Falls Dr.,  
Boonsboro MD 21713  
mcintiretracey@gmail.com

I am writing as a member of the Advisory Council of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, and also as an employee of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, MD.

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.

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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. The museum that I work for was the recipient of funding last year, and as a result, we are able to upgrade our exhibits and continue to be the top tourist attraction in Fredrick.

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.**

I recognize the thoughtful intent behind this legislation and believe 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, I respectfully urge favorable consideration and passage of **SB 638** and **HB 654** during the current legislative session.

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Tracey McIntire  
HCWHA Advisory Council



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

**Testimony:** SB 638, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
HB 654, House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**From:** Luke McKnight, 1030 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 900 East, Washington, DC, 20005,  
Lmcknight@battlefields.org, American Battlefield Trust

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.

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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. The Trust acquired and preserved with MHAA grant funding the 19.83-acre Jacob Avey Tract at Antietam National Battlefield on the southeast edge of Sharpsburg in 2023. This property made up a portion of Jacob Avey's historic farm and saw significant action during the latter phase of the pivotal 1862 battle.

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.**

The American Battlefield Trust 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, the American Battlefield Trust 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.