

February 16, 2026



Delegate Dylan Behler
154 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Behler,

Re: HB0654

14 South Main Street
Berlin, MD 21811
BeachesBaysWaterWays.com
info@BeachtoBayHeritage.org
410-251-3163

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Lisa Challenger

PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Andre Nieto Jaime

The Beach to Bay Heritage Area is in FULL SUPPORT of the legislative initiative HB0654 which will allow for lifting the cap on Maryland Heritage Area funding. The proposed legislation would allow the Maryland Heritage Areas program to receive up to \$12 million annually, lifting the current cap of \$6 million. The legislation does not mandate new funding. It simply removes the outdated cap, allowing the program to grow in future years if and when state revenues permit.

The Maryland Heritage Area program is remarkable, with community driven projects and initiatives that grow our local economies here in Maryland. The return on investment is stunning, generating \$319.8 million in tax revenues statewide.

In the Beach to Bay Heritage Area, these funds have supported the renovation efforts of Henry's Hotel, Ocean City's first boarding house and hotel for blacks, new exhibits at Germantown School, a Rosenwald School, repairs to Furnace Town's historic Nassawango Iron Furnace, restoration of the skipjack, City of Crisfield and the Pocomoke Indian Nation, traveling exhibit. These five projects alone total more than \$250,000 in leveraged dollars.

Currently, there is a \$6 million gap in funding ability each year, stalling high impact projects. Grant levels have not been raised in 30 years, and this future funding will allow the grant levels to rise to where they can be the most impactful in our counties, towns, and rural communities. In these difficult economic times, the Maryland Heritage Areas program is one of the solutions and the demand is growing every year.

This program is the primary tool used to encourage heritage tourism to Maryland, where heritage/cultural visitors stay longer and spend more money in our communities.

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The Beach to Bay Heritage Area appreciates your continued support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority full funding during the current and previous legislative sessions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Challenger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Challenger
Executive Director