



PRESERVATION MARYLAND

February 24, 2026

Hon. Melissa Wells
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland

Chairperson Wells,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony strongly in **SUPPORT of HB728.**

What Does This Legislation Do?

The legislation is relatively simple. This bill would allow select agencies and nonprofits to support each other in cooperative efforts on projects pertaining to *historic preservation, archaeology, and conservation*. The agencies included under this new measure are the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS), Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and Maryland Department of Planning (MDP).

Will it Cost More Money?

No, bill sponsors and advocates do not believe there is any fiscal impact since it requires NO new funds and imposes no mandate. It will simply create an additional tool for agencies to use on preservation projects using existing funds.

Why Is this Necessary?

Unlike the federal government and many other states, Maryland state agencies are often prohibited by antiquated procurement rules from working directly with nonprofit organizations unless there is a specific, delineated grant program.

This blanket prohibition stifles innovation, prevents collaboration, and diminishes the potential for private philanthropy to support state agency projects.

How Do We Know This Will Work?

In limited circumstances, this type of cooperation is already possible (due to existing procurement exemptions like that which this bill would address) and has been very effective.

- For example, an existing procurement exemption enables the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to work directly with nonprofits on conservation service projects, using tailored agreements to deliver public benefit while avoiding the cost and delay of unnecessary RFP processes, particularly for smaller projects.
- **A Proven Federal Model:** Many federal agencies already operate this way. The Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units (CESU) network, for instance, includes 500+ nonprofit and academic partners working with 19 federal agencies on complex preservation and conservation challenges. This network has operated in the manner envisioned by this bill for the past 27 years.

Why Now?

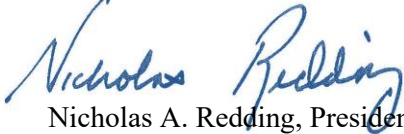
This change would empower state agencies — many of which are already operating with reduced staff and resources — to continue addressing important preservation priorities by leveraging the capacity, expertise, and efficiency of nonprofit partners. As federal and state resources become far more limited, this small change would allow Maryland to *stretch dollars further* by working with mission-aligned nonprofit partners on shared goals, avoiding duplicative procurement processes and unnecessary administrative overhead.

Will This Hurt Small Businesses or Reduce Community Input?

No, absolutely not. In fact, the bill was drafted with this in mind and includes several key requirements to 1) make any subcontracting associated with the projects fully competitive, 2) engage and market to local communities for project planning, and 3) transparently report on partnership outcomes.

We sincerely appreciate the committee's consideration and ask for a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on HB728.

Appreciatively,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas Redding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicholas A. Redding, President & CEO