MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS Coalition

Small Investments. Statewide Impact. **Lift the Cap on Heritage Area Funding**

Maryland's Heritage Areas Deliver Big Returns for Local Communities

Maryland's 13 Heritage Areas are economic powerhouses: drawing visitors, boosting local businesses, supporting jobs, and generating **$319.8 million in tax revenue** that benefits communities across our state. The current Maryland Heritage Areas Program funding level of $6 million delivers strong returns. **More than $5.1 million flows directly back** into Maryland communities each year, supporting projects, partnerships, historic sites, museums, trails, events, and local revitalization work.

An Outdated Funding Cap Is Holding the Program Back

Despite its success, the program is limited by a **$6 million statutory cap** that prevents the program from growing, even in years when the administration has the capacity to invest more. **Over $12 million in grant requests** were submitted this year alone, double the cap-limited amount the program can award.

As a result, **eligible, community-driven projects go unfunded** each year.

The **cap limits future growth,** even in strong fiscal years.

HB0654 & SB0638: A Smart, Simple Fix

It is a straightforward "lift the cap" bill:

It **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 It simply **removes the outdated cap,** allowing the program to grow **in future years if and when state revenues permit.**

This ensures Maryland can continue responding to rising demand, supporting high-impact local projects, and remaining competitive with other states investing in heritage tourism.

This legislation does not ask the state to spend more today. It preserves Maryland's flexibility to invest wisely when resources allow.

What This Means for Maryland's Communities

With the cap lifted, Maryland has the option to:

- Support more local projects that strengthen towns, counties, and Main Streets in years when funding is available.
- Leverage more partner investment by increasing program capacity when the state is able.
- Respond to growing interest in heritage tourism statewide.
- Expand access and opportunity for communities across all regions of Maryland.

Maryland has **13 certified Heritage Areas,** covering portions of **every county and Baltimore City.** Since 1996, the Heritage Areas Program has been a cornerstone for driving heritage tourism, celebrating local stories, and supporting economic growth across the state.

Learn more at **marylandheritageareas.org.**

INVEST IN MARYLAND'S HERITAGE. INVEST IN MARYLAND'S FUTURE.