



Jack A. Graham
General Manager
Ripken Professional Baseball LLC
d/b/a Aberdeen IronBirds

Maryland General Assembly
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

Thank you for your consideration of the legislation before you, House Bill 897, Sports Entertainment Facilities Act of 2022. As you know, the game of baseball is modernizing rapidly, and many local municipally owned stadiums are being forced to improve and upgrade their player development and fan-facing resources to meet the demands of the modern game. The Maryland Stadium Authority, acting on behalf of many facilities facing these challenges, has the support of the Aberdeen IronBirds, Advanced-A Baltimore Orioles affiliate, located in Harford County. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary of the field's first game this year, there are many ways in which it will need to adapt and change for our next two decades along with our municipal partner, the City of Aberdeen.

During our stadium's time in Aberdeen, it has been a source of player development for future stars in Camden Yards and across Major League Baseball, as well as a source of employment and tax revenue, but most importantly Ripken Stadium is a community gathering place for entertainment, celebration, public need, and making memories as a family right here in Harford County, Maryland. To continue contributing in these capacities as baseball changes, much about the facility can be improved for the public good and for the good of the game. The IronBirds are appreciative of the state's previous assistance with improving the facility, including safety railing, synthetic turf, and sports lighting, and hopeful for future improvements.

As the owners of the facility, the City of Aberdeen recently had an assessment conducted by engineering firm EwingCole. The assessment acted not only as a measurement of the condition of the stadium's systems and structures, but also of its compliance with Major League Baseball facility requirements. The assessment revealed many areas where the features of the facility do not meet the expectations laid out by Major League Baseball. A pool of financial resources as proposed in HB 897 would undoubtedly be a source of relief for a small municipality and us as their tenant in completing these necessary changes. The IronBirds are intent on continuing to support local professional minor league baseball in this public facility, in both entertainment and economic capacities, and appreciate the support afforded by the MSA, the General Assembly, and the people of Maryland.

On behalf of our team's ownership, the Ripken family, we ask that you make HB 897 a component of protecting Maryland's legacy in the game of baseball as well as the resources of its communities.

Respectfully,

Jack A. Graham
General Manager

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