



DELMARVA SHOREBIRDS BASEBALL CLUB
Class "A" Affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles

March 9, 2022

The Honorable, Chair, Delegate Maggie McIntosh
The Honorable, Vice Chair, Delegate Mark S. Chang
Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support - HB 897 Sports Entertainment Facilities Act of 2022

Madam Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As general manager of the Delmarva Shorebirds and Arthur W. Perdue Stadium in Salisbury, Maryland, we fully support HB0897 - Sports Entertainment Facilities Act of 2022 that further elevate Maryland as a sports destination by investing in our award-winning facilities to maintain our professional teams, serve our communities and create business opportunities across the State for years to come.

To further establish Maryland as a premier destination for sports, the Sports Entertainment Facilities Act of 2022, through the MSA, is an initiative to help fund much needed capital improvements at Minor League Baseball (MiLB) ballparks across the state, and at other sports facilities.

With ballpark upgrades now required by Major League Baseball's (MLB) recent reorganization of its minor leagues, this bill will help Maryland's minor league teams to maintain their Major League Baseball affiliations and continue to play ball in our state. The ballparks located in Aberdeen, Bowie, Frederick, Hagerstown, Salisbury, and Waldorf offer year-round budget-friendly family entertainment and generate economic impact in six local communities in Maryland. Year-round events at the MiLB ballparks create jobs and generate sports, leisure and business visitor spending with the resulting tax revenues reinvested to fund essential citizen services and improve Marylander's quality of life.

In addition to MiLB games, year-round usage of these facilities for other sports, concerts, festivals plus corporate events, non-profit fundraisers, social occasions, and family functions, further contribute to the value of the ballparks to their communities.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Delmarva Shorebirds and Arthur W. Perdue Stadium were transformed into a community center that included, testing and vaccination sites to serve Marylanders in need. As allowed during the COVID-19 crisis, we served as a place of normalcy for the community. The team and facility hosted virtual community engagement events, and as allowed in-person events that included youth baseball tournaments, drive-in firework shows, socially distant outdoor movie nights, graduation ceremonies for Wicomico County High Schools, Wor-Wic Community College, and several other events to support and raise funds for our community non-profit organizations.



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With the economic impact, prestige, and civic pride of being home to the Baltimore Orioles Single-A Affiliate, the Delmarva Shorebirds, players and personnel support numerous non-profits, schools, churches with service on local boards, donations, fundraisers, and appearances in the community throughout the year. Annually we raise funds and make monetary donations to area non-profits through our Fly Together Fund at the Community Foundation and donate thousands of tickets to families that may not otherwise be afforded the ability to attend a professional baseball game.

According to MLB Research Data Portal home game attendance numbers for the Delmarva Shorebirds, the team brought 3.2 million visitors to Salisbury, Md 2005 - 2019. In addition, our non-game day stadium usage draws tens of thousands of visitors annually for events such as Delmarva Bike and national youth sporting events in conjunction with Wicomico County Tourism.

The Baltimore Orioles MiLB affiliations stretch the team's influence across the state with Double-A Bowie Baysox, High-A Aberdeen IronBirds, and Low-A Delmarva Shorebirds. There have been 14.3 million visitors to Maryland communities through Orioles minor league operations since 2005 (FYI the 2020 season was canceled due to COVID). These MiLB teams create a robust pipeline of talent and promote synergies between the Baltimore Orioles and inspire future fans in the stands at Camden Yards.

For the reasons expressed in this letter, we request a favorable report on HB0897 - Sports Entertainment Facilities Act of 2022.

Respectfully,

Chris Bitters

Chris Bitters
General Manager
Delmarva Shorebirds
Arthur W. Perdue Stadium

cc:

Senator Mary Beth Carozza
Delegate Wayne A. Hartman
Delegate Carl Anderton, Jr.
Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes
Delegate Christopher T. Adams
Delegate Johnny Mautz
Delegate Charles J. Otto