



February 13, 2023

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes
Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB0674 MHT – Historic Preservation Partnership Program and Fund

Dear Chairman Barnes and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee:

We are writing to offer AIA Maryland's support for House Bill 0674 to allow for our nonprofit partner organizations to be able to take advantage of a new loan program administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. Surrounding states, such as Virginia, Delaware, and New Jersey, already have similar legislation in place and experience very positive outcomes for their endangered historic properties as a result. Since this would be a loan program and only available to nonprofits, there would be an application process, state review and nonprofit board oversight, ensuring efficient accounting for the program. This bill could enable more organizations in Maryland, who because of nonprofit status would not ordinarily afford such costly undertakings, to participate in an historic preservation program encouraging direct and immediate investment in our state's older structures when urgently required.

Why does this matter? Preservation protects the cultural and aesthetic qualities of our older neighborhoods, providing a sense of community cohesion. Historic neighborhoods often attract the most diversity, and they retain a greater percentage of their residents over time, creating social stability. Historic rehabilitation makes use of existing development and infrastructure, slowing sprawl and preserving farmland and open space. It employs thousands of Marylanders in good paying, permanent positions in all parts of the state. Rehabilitation also typically increases local property values, resulting in greater property tax revenue.

AIA Maryland represents approximately 2,000 Architects in the state of Maryland. Because of our state's long and impressive history, many of our members conduct research, advocate for, and successfully work on historic projects. We believe that Maryland must continue to fund supportive preservation programs across the state. Historic preservation not only preserves our state's rich history, but it is also business friendly and economically beneficial. Historic preservation programs have been proven to have profound economic impacts in our state, and there are numerous environmental and carbon benefits associated with preserving our existing building stock.

We encourage you to vote in favor of this legislation and encourage your continued commitment and investment in the Maryland Historical Trust and its critically important preservation programs. Thank you for your consideration and your vote!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barton Ross".

Barton Ross, AIA
President