



**MARYLAND
TOURISM
COALITION**

February 21, 2024

Delegate Clippinger, Chair
Judiciary Committee
121 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of HB 1065 - Public Safety - Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program
Chairperson Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

My name is Matt Libber, and I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC). I am writing to you today to express MTC's support for House Bill 1065. The Maryland Tourism Coalition is a trade organization with members representing all areas of tourism in the State of Maryland. Our mission is to support businesses and organizations that cater to the tourism industry through education, networking, and advocacy. As such, MTC asks the committee to vote in favor of this bill.

This bill will allow our entertainment districts across Maryland, and particularly in Baltimore City, to provide additional security measures to ensure visitors to our great State are safe and comfortable while they are here. As we have seen increases in violent crime across the nation, entertainment districts have been a frequent target for these instances. Staffing shortages for police departments across the State have slowed response times and spread law enforcement coverage quite thin over the past few years. This rise in crime in conjunction with staffing shortages has provided visitors with a sense of unease and worry when visiting. This grant program will allow businesses and communities a means to provide extra security which in turn eases any fears that visitors may have.

Tourism is a major driver of the Maryland economy. If visitors to our State do not feel safe while they are here, they will either not come at all or not return if they have a bad experience. Tourism accounts for 19.4 billion in visitor spending each year and Maryland. Tourism supports 187,296 jobs, making it the 10th largest private sector industry in Maryland. Tourism also generates \$2.3 billion in taxes. That would cover the average salaries of more than 30,000 public school teachers.

As you can see tourism is a key piece of what makes Maryland a great state to visit as well as live in. We must take steps to ensure that our residents and visitors alike are safe and secure when they visit our entertainment districts in order to protect and expand the tourism industry in Maryland. As such we ask that you vote to approve House Bill 1065.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Libber
Legislative Chair
Maryland Tourism Coalition
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