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# MTC 2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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## ABOUT THE MARYLAND TOURISM COALITION

MTC represents the interests of the tourism community across the state of Maryland with hotels, restaurants, retail locations, attractions, destination marketing organizations, and small businesses counted among our members. Our Legislative Committee, comprised of a cross section of members appointed by the Board of Directors, convenes regularly throughout the year to discuss and consider the potential impact of proposed legislation on the tourism community and to determine what, if any, action should be taken. MTC has a contracted lobbyist, Frank Boston III, to advise the organization and advocate on its behalf. The MTC Legislative Committee has identified the following priorities for the 2021 General Assembly session.

## MTC SUPPORTS TOURISM MARKETING FUNDING

- **TO BUILD UPON POSITIVE TRENDS PRIOR TO COVID-19 IN THE TOURISM SECTOR AND REMAIN COMPETITIVE WITH NEIGHBORING REGIONS, WE STRONGLY URGE THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE LEVEL FUNDING TO THE MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD (MTDB) ACCORDING TO PROVISIONS LAID OUT IN THE TOURISM PROMOTION ACT OF 2008.**

Funding initiatives for tourism promotion and marketing have consistently demonstrated a proven return on investment. MTC recommends that the General Assembly continue to fund the Maryland Tourism Development Board at levels consistent with the funding formula laid out by the Tourism Promotion Act of 2008 in order to enable new marketing strategies and keep pace with neighboring states.

MTC requests that the budget from 2020 be kept in place for 2021. It is imperative that the tourism industry continue to receive financial support as it is one of the hardest hit sectors in our economy. Support of tourism will stimulate our state's economy, provide jobs, and generate tax revenue .

## MTC SUPPORTS A PRO-BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN MARYLAND

- **TO SUPPORT THE HUNDREDS OF BUSINESSES, MANY OF THEM SMALL AND FAMILY-OWNED, THAT MAKE UP MARYLAND'S TOURISM COMMUNITY, MTC OPPOSES ANY REGULATORY LEGISLATION THAT WOULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY.**

Maryland's tourism and hospitality industry directly and indirectly represents 1 in every 16 jobs in the state. Any action taken by the General Assembly related to employment regulations, should consider any possible negative impact on the state's tourism community, and small businesses in particular, especially given the severe challenges already facing the industry as a result of COVID-19. Experience ratings related to unemployment should remain unchanged from 2019. The impact of COVID-forced layoffs on our unemployment rates should not be held against small businesses.

## **MTC SUPPORTS THE STATE'S LOCAL DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS**

- **MARYLAND'S DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN PROMOTING OUR STATE'S UNIQUE AND DIVERSE TOURISM ASSETS.**

From the mountains of Western Maryland to the beaches of Ocean City, local DMO's are on the front lines, telling compelling stories and encouraging visitation from all over the world. Those visitors contribute to the local economy and support thousands of jobs and small businesses.

MTC supports bond bills and funding initiatives supported by Maryland's DMO's.

## **MTC SUPPORTS THE STATE'S RESTAURANTS, HOTELS, BREWERIES, WINERIES AND DISTILLERIES**

- **MARYLAND'S BREWERIES, WINERIES, DISTILLERIES, AND RESTAURANTS ARE A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE STATE. MTC SUPPORTS LEGISLATION THAT ALLOWS THESE INDUSTRIES TO GROW AND STAY COMPETITIVE WITH SURROUNDING, LESS REGULATED NEIGHBORS SUCH AS D.C., VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE.**

MTC supports the legislation being submitted by the alcohol manufacturer to codify executive orders that allow for statewide delivery by employees, direct shipping by common carriers (UPS, etc), the lifting of sales caps for to-go sales, and flexible licensing fees.

MTC will also support legislation proposed by the Restaurant Association of Maryland as it pertains to legislation that expands alcohol sale privileges.

## **MTC SUPPORTS PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR VISITATION TO MARYLAND AND DIRECT AID TO TOURISM BUSINESSES**

- **IN ORDER TO STIMULATE THE RECOVERY OF THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT INDUSTRY, THE STATE MUST NOT ONLY PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR MARKETING AND PROMOTION, BUT ALSO CONSIDER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR TRAVELERS AND DIRECT AID TO TOURISM BUSINESSES.**

The overall recovery of Maryland's post-COVID economy will be led by the tourism and hospitality industry. MTC supports creative incentive programs, including, but not limited to, tax holidays, that would encourage out-of-state visitors to spend their time and money in Maryland's hotels, restaurants, museums, and attractions; thereby supporting those critical businesses and their workers.

Not only is bringing in outside visitors important, but encouraging our local Marylanders to travel within the state is another way to stimulate recovery. MTC supports a tax credit initiative proposed for Marylander's who spend money on in-state lodging and attractions/amusements (including museums, amusement parks, state parks, recreation, arcades, etc). The Explore Maryland Tax Credit would be a one-time tax credit that Marylanders could claim on state income tax through December 31, 2022.

MTC also supports additional direct aid to tourism and hospitality businesses impacted by the pandemic in the form of grants and low-interest loans. This aid will prove especially crucial during the first part of 2021 as many businesses struggle to stay afloat with the hope of welcoming visitors again in the spring and fall.

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