

Maryland Tourism Coalition

2023 Session Report

April 20, 2023

Session Prep:

We entered the 2023 legislative session with a new administration and legislature, and thus approached this session with the ambition of increasing tourism budget and seeking key administrative appointments. Although we did not increase our tourism budget, we successfully lobbied to maintain over \$15million in the capital budget for the Tourism Development Board. Additionally, we held several conversations with the presiding officers to recommend appointments of individuals that our industry determined would be champions for the tourism industry. Finally, we had some good wins in the legislature!

Priority Bill:

HB 200/SB 181 - Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2024)

Sponsors: President, Speaker (By Request - Administration)

Status: House Bill Passed Enrolled

The Tourism budget allocated a total of \$15.5 million. Even with a new administration, legislature, and legislative rules governing the budget, we were able to maintain this number. MTC held internal discussions about us seeking an increase, but as stated above, with the new system, we were happy about maintaining this.

In addition, there will be a study conducted by the Dept. of Commerce about Historic Ships in Baltimore and their impact on tourism. Further, \$150,000 in general funds was added to the Office of Tourism Development within the Dept. of Commerce for the purpose of providing a grant to Visit Annapolis, to study the feasibility of a conference center in Annapolis. There was also another \$150,000 grant to Howard County for funding with their Welcome Center. MTC as always was well represented in the hearings.

Other Significant Bills:

HB 677- Pride of Baltimore II- Appropriations- Extension

Sponsor: Clippinger

Status: Passed

As stated above, there is a study being conducted on Historic Ships. This bill ties into that study. This bill will extend the required appropriation for \$500k in the State budget until 2028.

HB 524- Maryland Stadium Authority- Camden Yards Sports Facilities Funds and Bus Rapid Transit Fund

Sponsor: Stadium Authority

Status: Passed

We followed this bill because it created a fund for the Camden Yards Sports Facilities Fund. MTC believes this will help contribute to tourism. The bill also altered the membership of the Stadium Authority. MTC did not take a position on the Bud Rapid Transit Fund aspect of the bill.

HB 1038/SB 734- Transportation- Highways- Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program

Sponsors: Delegate Solomon and Senator Zucker

Status: Failed

One of MTC's priorities entering 2023 surrounded tourism signage. We prepared to speak with the Administration regarding a budgetary request for signs alongside highways across Maryland. However, we were supportive of the legislature's attempt at a bill to address this with HB 1038/SB 734. The bill would have created the Tourism Area and Corridor Signage Program, which would essentially create what MTC desired. Although the bill did not pass, MTC remains enthusiastic about this program in the future.

HB 178/SB 497- State Designations- State Spirit- Maryland Rye

Sponsors: Delegate Reznik and Senator Hershey

Status: Passed

MTC has supported this bill for several consecutive years. The bill was unsuccessful for many consecutive years, but as this bill had bipartisan support, MTC was able to pass the bill this year. Maryland now officially designates Maryland Rye Whiskey as its official spirit!

HB 551/SB 546- Department of Service and Civic Innovation and Maryland Corps Program Service Year Options Pathways- Established (Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)

Sponsors: Governor

Status: Passed

This bill was one of the Governor's priority pieces of legislation. MTC was very supportive of it as well. We were mainly concerned about creating opportunities in the lodging industry. Unfortunately, the bill did not ultimately include money or vocational training for lodging, but MTC remains committed to improving this program.

Minimum Wage Bills

HB 594/SB 555- Fair Wage Act of 2023 (Passed)

HB 1256/SB 803- Payment of Minimum Wage- Tipped Employees (Failed)

MTC has historically opposed minimum wage bills but altered its position recently. MTC remained neutral this year. A \$15 minimum wage acceleration bill passed this year, but it will not be tied to CPI. \$15 will be the minimum wage in 2024 not 2025. The second bill related to minimum wage dealt with the tipped employee credit. This bill sought to nullify the State's tipped credit by 2028. This bill ultimately failed.

HB 988/ SB828 - Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program- Modifications

Sponsors: Qi and Hayes

Status: Passed

The Maryland comprehensive Family and Medical Leave Insurance program legislation passed in 2022. In 2023, a bill was introduced to make modifications to the program. According to the Secretary of Labor, the program is not quite ready to be implemented, and thus, this bill provided the needed extension. The program will begin 10/1/2024 instead of 10/1/23. The rate to be in effect starting 10/1/24 through June 30, 2026 (instead of 1/1/24 through 6/30/2025). The Secretary will conduct a study on cost analysis about maintaining solvency each year beginning in 2025, NOT 2024. The other provision that was modified was that employers must contribute 50% (it was 25% before) of total rate of contribution and employees to do 50% (75% before).

Alcohol Related bills

HB 595/SB 448- Manufacturer's Licenses and Off-Site Permits

Sponsors: Qi and Gile

Status: Passed

Over the course of a legislative session, there are hundreds of alcohol related bills that are introduced. MTC has taken it upon itself to sort through these bills and offer its support to the

bills that it views as contributing to tourism. In 2023, MTC supported HB 595/SB 448, which ultimately passed. This bill extended the deadline on licenses related to the sale and delivery of alcoholic beverage manufacturers. This bill also delays the date that license holders are authorized to sell beer at off-site permitted events.