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# MARYLAND TOURISM COALITION

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## 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



### **ABOUT THE MARYLAND TOURISM COALITION**

MTC represents the interests of the tourism community across the state of Maryland with hotels, restaurants, retail locations, outdoor recreation, attractions, destination marketing organizations, and small businesses counted among its members. The 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 and partner, Ari Plaut, to advise the organization and advocate on its behalf.

### **Increase State Tourism Budget**

Maryland is currently being outspent by all of our neighboring states except Delaware. In order to be competitive in a highly competitive market, Maryland must increase funds dedicated to increasing marketing dollars for the State as well as local DMOs. Marketing dollars spent on tourism yield a high return on investment with every \$1 spent bringing back \$31 dollars to the State.

### **Oppose Legislation to Eliminate the Tipped Credit for Restaurant Workers (State and Local)**

Local and Statewide legislation has been introduced over the past few years to eliminate Tipped Credit for restaurants when determining wages for staff. These bills are misleading in that these workers are already protected to make at least minimum wage as well as protection from wage theft from employers. This bill would lead to higher operating costs for restaurants who would be forced to pass these costs on to customers. Increased costs at restaurants would be a deterring factor for potential visitors coming to Maryland, which would have a further impact across all tourism-based businesses.

### **Support Adequate Transportation Funding Across Maryland**

Transportation infrastructure is an integral part of the tourism industry. In order for visitors to come to Maryland we must have safe and convenient roadways, modern and efficient airports, seaports, and train stations. We must also have public transportation options for visitors to move around locally within a destination. Maryland needs to continue to invest in transportation infrastructure to facilitate the efficient, safe, and convenient movement of people around the State.

### **Oppose Increases to the State Alcohol Tax**

Maryland's craft beer, distillers, cideries, and wineries have seen a decline in popularity in recent years as the tastes and preferences of younger generations change. Maryland has seen a number of closings, mergers, and relocations in its alcohol sector. An increase in the State alcohol tax would further put strain on this sector as it would increase prices at a time of declining sales.

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### **Oppose Implementation of Internet Gaming in Maryland**

Maryland Casinos are a major tourist attraction to the State, bringing in millions of visitors each year. These visitors spend money not only in the casinos, but at the surrounding business and tourist attractions that surround them. Opening up the State to internet gaming would have a detrimental impact on casinos workers as well as the surrounding business that would see a drop in visitors from those patrons that choose to gamble from their home instead of visiting a casino in person.

### **Oppose Taxes on Services**

Many tourism-based businesses are service related as well as many of the ancillary business that tourism-based businesses rely on each day. Implementing taxes on services would drive up prices as these taxes as passed on to customers. Tourism-based businesses are typically small businesses that rely on outside services such as accounting, human resources, and legal services in order to operate. Taxes on these services would have a large impact on the operating costs of the tourism-based business which may make them unsustainable.

### **Oppose Current Plan for Offshore Windfarm**

The current plan for an offshore wind farm would place 114 turbines as close as 10.7 miles, nearly half the distance of other projects on the east coast. These turbines, due to their size, would be visible from the shore both during the day and at night, due to safety lighting requirements. The project also plans to build an industrial maintenance facility in the West Ocean City Harbor, displacing one of the few remaining commercial fish piers in the area. The loss of views from the beach as well as the impact on the seafood industry, a vital part of Maryland tourism, would have a detrimental impact on the tourism industry of Maryland's coastal communities.

### **Support Efforts to Attract Meetings and Conferences**

Maryland has traditionally succeeded in the leisure tourism market but has struggles attracting meetings and conferences to our State. Business tourism can be an important sector to increase tourism to our state, particularly during non-peak seasons and weekdays. The conference includes not only meeting spaces, food and beverage, and hotel stays, but typically provides attendees with cultural experiences and introduce our State to people who may not have thought of visiting us for leisure travel previously.

### **Youth Sports Facility Act (Federal)**

This federal legislation would allow the Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 to be used for the development of youth sports facilities. Youth sports are a major economic driver with youth sports tourism accounting for \$52.2 Billion in direct spending in the US. Allowing EDA grants to be used for sports facility development would allow more Maryland communities to take advantage of the sports tourism market.