

TESTIMONY BY HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER STENY H. HOYER ON
LEGISLATION TO DESIGNATE A SOUTHERN MARYLAND NATIONAL
HERITAGE AREA

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

June 15, 2021

Mr. HOYER. "I want to thank Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher and Members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing today on H.R. 2024, which I introduced to establish a Southern Maryland National Heritage Area. Senators Cardin and Van Hollen have filed a companion in the Senate as well. I believe that this legislation would yield enormous benefits to the people of my district and to Americans who come to visit Southern Maryland and enjoy all it has to offer.

“Southern Maryland, which I am proud to represent, is not only the site of Maryland’s first colonial settlements and the first contacts between Europeans and Native American nations in my state. It is also the place where colonial Americans first legislated religious toleration, inspiring our First Amendment. Moreover, it is where the first person of African descent was elected to serve in an American legislature and where the first woman petitioned for equal suffrage. Southern Maryland was also home to so many who endured the hardships of slavery and participated in abolition efforts, including the Underground Railroad. It is the ancestral home of the Piscataway Conoy tribe, whose culture continues to influence communities across Southern Maryland. It is a region filled with history and with wonderful natural resources, including the Chesapeake Bay, the Patuxent River, and the Potomac River.

“Designating a Southern Maryland National Heritage Area would help preserve natural landscapes, contribute to cleaner air and water, and promote tourism that helps our local economy. The legislation I introduced would bring the federal government in as a partner in this effort, alongside state and local authorities, and authorize up to \$10 million over the next decade to be matched by state and local funding. If enacted, the national heritage area this bill creates would be only the fourth in Maryland – and the second to be entirely located within our state.

“I want to thank you for your consideration of this bill, which is very important to the communities of Maryland’s Fifth District. I also want to thank Lucille Walker, the Executive Director of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area, for testifying today. She has been an outstanding leader for natural and historic conservation across Southern Maryland. I look forward to working with her and with all of you to move this legislation through committee and ready it for consideration by the full House. I appreciate the Subcommittee’s support and its recognition of the many benefits to this legislation – not only to Marylanders but to all Americans.”