



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

**HOUSE BILL 1658 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT –
BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA – FUNDING AND REPORTING**

March 12, 2020

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

House Bill 1658 requires the Governor to include an appropriation to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in the annual budget from fiscal year 2022 through fiscal year 2026. The bill also requires the BSO to report annually on the effectiveness of the funding provided by the State, including a complete statement on the financial condition of the BSO and an accounting of all financial receipts and expenditures.

Last year, the BSO's fiscal troubles and operating deficits led to conflicts between management and musicians, and forced the BSO to cancel its summer series and delay the start of the 2019-2020 season. After months of hard work by the BSO Board, management, musicians, community members, and civic leaders, the BSO has created a clear vision and strategic five-year plan. Renewed fundraising efforts have been extremely successful, with over \$8 million in recent gifts.

The appropriations required in House Bill 1658 would offer a bridge to the BSO as it regains its footing on the path to a successful future. The State grant funds would gradually diminish, providing \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2022, \$1.3 million in fiscal year 2023, \$1.1 million in fiscal year 2024, \$900,000 in fiscal year 2025, and finally \$700,000 in fiscal year 2026. With this State support, the BSO projects that it will no longer operate at a deficit by fiscal year 2025.

The Greater Baltimore Committee recognizes the importance of the BSO as a cultural anchor for not only the Baltimore region, but the entire State of Maryland. The BSO provides cultural and educational opportunities to students and citizens statewide and enjoys a positive international reputation. The appropriation required by House Bill 1658 will help to ensure that the BSO can continue its outstanding performances and educational offerings for generations to come.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 1658.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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