



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 135
Admissions and Amusement Tax – Distribution to Maryland State Arts Council

Thank you for your consideration of HB135. Originally signed into law as Chapter 145 (April 2016), this legislation removes the sunset provision and continues the distribution of \$1 million to the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) through the Perseveration of Cultural Arts (POCA) monies. This \$1 million distribution has helped to bring continued investment towards MSAC over the past 5 years.

As Director of the Academy Art Museum in Easton, MD on the Eastern Shore, I wholeheartedly support HB135. Now more than 60 year old, the Academy Art Museum is the premier accredited art museum on the Eastern Shore, and as a cultural center of year-round community we serve over 50,000 visitors, 5,500 K-12 school children, and 3,500 adults with our arts educational programs and exhibitions.

As MSAC grant recipients, we are adamantly in favor of HB 135 which will provide meritocratic capital funding for arts programs from around the state of Maryland. The bill will finally make it possible for smaller and medium sized organizations like the Academy Art Museum to address critical capital needs above and beyond our annual operations. Our museum facility includes three historic houses, which have ongoing deferred maintenance needs to maintain museum conditions.

HB135 provides organizations like us with the critical tools needed to address priority issues. It is vital to pass HB135 this year so that we can begin to address these needs as soon as possible. The capital funds and application process will be administered by the MSAC which has an intimate knowledge of the unique needs of individual organization, which we believe is another excellent feature of the bill.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 135.

Sincerely,

Benjamin T. Simons
Director
Academy Art Museum
Easton, MD
January 29, 2020