



Board of Directors

John Harris  
*President*

Dawn O'Croinin  
*Vice President*

Susan Yager  
*Treasurer*

Heather Lockard-  
Wheeler  
*Secretary*

Board Members

Michael Brown  
Jennifer Burdick  
Indra Elangovan  
Heather Kniotek  
DeSimone  
John Shields  
Joseph Zuccaro

Staff, Ex Officio

Julia Cooke  
*Artistic and General  
Director*

Brendan Cooke  
*Founder Emeritus*

Nicole Steinberg  
*Operations Director*

Courtney Kalbacker  
*Director of  
Community  
Engagement*

Advisory Council

Suzanne Balaes-Blair  
J Austin Bitner  
Michael Blair  
David Dimmock  
Dennis Ferguson  
Erika Juengst  
Mimi Hatch  
Hilary B. Miller  
Elisabet Pujadas  
Maureen Renner  
Ben Schuman  
Steven White

January 29, 2020

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 135**

**Admissions and Amusement Tax – Distribution to Maryland State Arts Council**

Dear Sirs and Madams,

Thank you for your consideration of HB135. Originally signed into law as Chapter 145 (April 2016), this legislation removes the sunset provision from the 2016 bill and continues the \$1 million allocation for the Maryland State Arts Council from the Preservation Of Cultural Arts (POCA) monies.

This \$1 million distribution has helped to bring continued investment towards MSAC over the past 5 years.

BCO serves Baltimore's opera lovers by offering top-level, professional opera performances in an affordable and accessible way, fostering outreach and development, and keeping the art form of opera an active part of Baltimore's artistic scene. We reach approximately 3,300 audience and community members (2,100 paid and 1,200 free) per season.

Our success is in large part due to annual support from the Maryland State Arts Council. We are deeply appreciative for this crucial support, as are the members of our community who attend our events. Baltimore is a great city which deserves great culture, and BCO is a thriving part of that.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julia Cooke".

Julia Cooke  
Artistic and General Director