



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 Preservation of Cultural Arts (POCA) monies. This \$1 million distribution has helped to bring continued investment towards MSAC over the past 5 years, supporting the arts across our state.

The Maryland State Arts Council invests in advancing the arts for Maryland, providing grants and programs to support artistic excellence and ensure the broadest possible access, benefiting all Maryland residents. Here at the Peabody Institute, MSAC funding supports our ability to provide high-quality artistic performances to the Baltimore community at no cost. Spanning a range of genres, including classical, jazz, opera, dance, and choral music, Peabody's free concerts are staged primarily on the Peabody Institute campus in the heart of Baltimore City; some performances take place on-site at community partner organizations including Motor House, the Walters Art Museum, and branches of the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

The decision to eliminate ticket prices for all concerts at Peabody, beginning with the 2017-18 concert season, was made to reinforce our commitment to the Baltimore community and our deeply-held belief that artistic experiences should be accessible to all, regardless of geography, financial circumstances, or other barriers to access. MSAC funding is critical to our continued ability to provide more than 100 major concerts and events each year without charging for admission.

The Peabody Institute and the Maryland State Arts Council share a commitment to ensuring the accessibility of the arts and increasing the diversity represented on our artistic stages and in our audiences. MSAC funding has helped Peabody remove the barrier of cost from our concerts, which is a key component of our multi-faceted work to cultivate talent and attract audiences that better reflect the diversity of the Baltimore community and our world.

For these reasons, and on behalf of the hundreds of other arts organizations and artists across Maryland who depend on MSAC funding, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 135.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Bronstein', written over a horizontal line.

Fred Bronstein, Dean
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