

**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 from the 2016 bill and continues the \$1 million allocation for the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) from the Preservation Of Cultural Arts (POCA) monies.

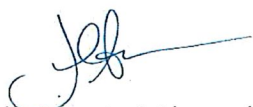
This \$1 million distribution has helped to bring continued investment towards MSAC over the past 5 years. This bill will bring continued investment toward MSAC and hundreds of arts organization and artists across Maryland who receive funding from the agency. All 24 local arts councils in each county and Baltimore City receive funds from MSAC. As importantly, HB135 ensures that arts education programs in schools across Maryland continue to be supported by MSAC.

Maryland State Art Council support of the Walters Art Museum is an essential part of our operating budget and crucial to our free admission and educational programs for all ages. Representing over 15% of our contributed budget, the MSAC grant allows the Walters to welcome over 160,000 visitors annually, people primarily from Maryland, as well as out-of-state tourists. Our weekend drop-in art making, annual community festivals, weekly programs for toddlers and early learners, as well as tours and lectures, are all available for free for our community. Perhaps most significantly, we serve over 26,000 students from Maryland with arts integration programs in classrooms and at the museum; our bus funding benefits 5,600 Title I students. Our art collections span over 7000 years of global cultures and we are always creating new ways—from exhibitions to musical performances—for the public to engage with this collection. Employing 150 Marylanders, the Walters also works with dozens of cultural, community organizations, and hundreds of artists every year. Thus, the MSAC grant awarded to the Walters is also shared through fees and stipends with many other groups and businesses in our region.

MSAC's robust funding is essential to not only the Walters Art Museum, but to our State's entire arts community. Removing the sunset provision that distributes \$1 million to MSAC through the POCA monies will continue to have significant impact on Maryland's citizens, students, and communities, as well as our economy. Having a steady source of operating support is vital to our sector.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 135. Please feel free to contact my office with any questions or to arrange a tour of the museum so you can learn more about the impact of this bill at the Walters (410-547-9000 ext. 601, [jmalexander@thewalters.org](mailto:jmalexander@thewalters.org)).

Most sincerely,



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