



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

Thank you for consideration of HB135. This legislation removes the sunset provision which distributes \$1 million to the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) through the Preservation of Cultural Arts (POCA) monies, and extends law originally enacted as Chapter 145 in April 2016.

The proposed legislation brings continued investment towards MSAC which funds hundreds of arts organizations and artists across the state of Maryland. Passing this legislation allows increased investment into each County Arts Council, and ensures arts in education programs across the state continue to be supported.

Alliegany County is consistently ranked as one of the poorest counties in the state of Maryland. Like many rural communities decimated by the departure of manufacturing and industry, we have turned to other avenues to revitalize, with arts and culture emerging as a growing force. In the past year alone, monies received from previous legislation provided one-time and ongoing support for projects and programs, which either did not exist before or had never been funded.

In 2019, the Allegany Arts Council received several such investments, of varying amounts, which enabled us to impact our community in a tremendous way. A \$3000 Creativity Grant permitted us to purchase a 3D printer, which allowed for the creation of a free additive manufacturing program taken to the far corners of our community. The program, held in community libraries and event fire halls across the County, introduced the concept of 3D modeling digital software to students, teaching them advanced technology required in today's manufacturing world. Students learned how to solve real-life problems using design, and 3D printing to bring those designs to life.

In addition to the Creativity funding, all designated Arts & Entertainment Districts received operational funding for the first time since our designation 16 years earlier. This funding allowed for the creation of a new brand identity, the development of a website, which will now showcase tax incentives and programs which support reinvestment in our community. But the real story is a parking garage – one which has sat nearly vacant for more than 40 years. A & E funding allowed us to paint and create vibrant and visual signage which increased the aesthetic look of the facility. However, our investment spurred investment from the City of Cumberland, which has now spent or plans to spend more than \$100,000 in a new ticketing system, updated signage, removal of parking meters, and other improvements. This investment would not have been undertaken without the seed money available through this legislation, and it proves even small investments create powerful partnerships.

The Allegany Arts Council serves as the umbrella organization for the arts in our County of more than 70,000 residents. We not only support our own initiatives, but the work of more than 15 other arts agencies through direct financial support. We serve as a major anchor in downtown Cumberland, and provide tangible support for other businesses, including restaurants, shops and related services.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB135.

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