



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 127
Maryland Arts and Culture Capital Grant Program**

Thank you for consideration of HB127. This legislation creates the Maryland Arts and Culture Capital Grant Program, a new capital grant fund which will be administered by the Maryland State Arts Council.

The Program has two key components which provide equitable access to funding for arts organization with more than and less than a \$3 million annual operating budget. This equality in funding allows for capital expenditures which far exceed funding generally available to small organizations, and ensures it is evenly distributed and accessible.

Allegany 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 our area. A program of this nature creates an influx of new investment where it is desperately needed. While we often hear of massive investments made in cities and other parts of our state, we face many of the same challenges – and more. Drugs, vagrancy, inadequate housing, lack of transportation and a loss of hope impact our community in a real and tangible way. **In our community, art and culture is not a simply luxury; it is a path to pulling out and up, and it is critical to our survival.**

Unlike many of our counterparts across the state, our pool of available philanthropists is small and these dollars are sought by many competing organizations; in fact, the largest gift we received from any individual in 2019 was \$7,000 – hardly providing for any type of capital effort. This Program would create a game-changing impact in our community.

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. While Allegany County's economic footprint across the State is small, we have an enormous presence in our community.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB127.

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