



CHESAPEAKE BAY MARITIME MUSEUM

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HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY FROM CHESAPEAKE BAY MARITIME MUSEUM

February 12, 2020

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM) has more than 73,000 items—historic objects, photographs, manuscripts, recorded oral histories, watercraft, and artworks—cataloged into its permanent collections. CBMM has legal title to more than 98% of these items through documented gift, purchase, or transfer. The remaining items may be one of the following:

- **Loans.** Our policies now require loans to be initiated or renewed for a term not exceeding two years for individual lenders, or three years for institutional lenders. All loans must be for a designated purpose, and that purpose is most often exhibition. CBMM currently has 309 items cataloged as loans to the museum.
- **Permanent loans.** While we no longer initiate “permanent loans” or loans without an expiration date, in the first 15 years of our operations (1965-1980), this was common practice. Where we have been able to reestablish contact with lenders, CBMM has converted these permanent loans to termed loans, so that through renewal paperwork CBMM maintains periodic contact with the lender. However, several remain as permanent loans without current lender contact information.
- **Found in Collections.** Items for which CBMM has no record of the owner or presumed donor are cataloged as “Found in Collections.” Such items may have been left intentionally by the owner without contact information. In other cases, an object or group of uncatalogued objects may be found without identifying donor contact information. CBMM has 979 items cataloged as “Found in Collections.”

Adhering to museum best practices for the care of collections—staff time for cataloging and inventory, proper mounting and housing of historic objects, space for exhibitions or storage, energy and equipment for climate control, security, preservation and conservation measures—are expensive. Because of this, museums must be prudent and selective about what is taken into the permanent collections.

SB 88 or HB 21 (without amendments) will enable Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and other museums across Maryland to assert legal title both to long-abandoned old loans whose owners are now untraceable, and for future items left at our doorstep.