



March 03, 2022

**Senate Budget & Taxation and House Appropriations
Committee**

RE: 2022 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021

**UNFAVORABLE TESTIMONY FOR PROPOSED
MARYLAND STATE ARTS COUNCIL FY2022 BUDGET**

Dear Speaker Jones, President Ferguson and honorable members of the general assembly,

We write to you today as a cohort of arts organizations representing some of the largest cultural institutions in Maryland. We also serve as members of Maryland Citizens for the Arts (MCA), the advocacy organization representing the advancement of public policy and investment in the arts. MCA has long championed the continued growth and investment of the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC). MSAC is a highly regarded government agency that provides critical investment and much needed professional development for hundreds of arts organizations and independent artists across the state.

Starting in 1994 with the Arts stabilization act (Chapter 298 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 1994), the annual appropriation for MSAC has grown into a robust funding investment mechanism for hundreds of arts organizations and artists across the state. The work of thousands of advocates helped secure this landmark arts legislation, and our work has continued for almost 30 years. Our collective advocacy has ensured that a generation of Marylanders from across the state has enjoyed access to incredible arts programming, rich educational experiences, and enhanced quality of life. Additionally, our sector has grown into a \$1 billion economic driver that employs thousands of workers and helps attract millions of tourists to the state each year. However, more recently, and much like the hospitality industry, the arts sector has been heavily impacted due to the COVID-19 health and safety closures. Many of our organizations have been shut down without any revenue generation since March of 2020. This has led to substantial revenue losses and unfortunate but

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necessary staff reductions. However, we are optimistic in our resolve and believe that we will be part of a speedy recovery. To achieve a robust recovery, we will require the support of all of our communities and funders from the private and public sectors.

To that end, we are gravely concerned about the fiscal year 2022 budget proposal given by Governor Hogan. He recommends to level fund the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) at \$24.5 million in his proposal. This would amount to a \$2.9 million reduction from the mandated MSAC appropriation. Given that the Governor provided MSAC with a \$3 million emergency fund via the rainy-day reserve (November 2020), this move makes little sense in helping our sector. Additionally, via the BRFA, the Governor has asked to recalculate the yearly appropriation mandate (Ch 298) for MSAC where instead of mirroring the state's annual general fund percent increase, he asks that the MSAC growth rate be calculated at a rate of the general fund increase **MINUS** one percent. This would result in significant reductions in arts investment for the foreseeable future and significantly depressed the sector's potential recovery.

Governor Hogan's proposals are both harmful and shortsighted. As stated, our sector is in dire need of additional financial support. Given the magnitude of these current economic challenges, it is probable that the industry's full recovery could take years. So, we must look to MSAC for increased investment and support, not less.

To that end, we respectfully ask for the rejection of the Governor's proposed revised funding formula and restore the MSAC mandate amount to \$27.3 million. We strongly encourage members of the general assembly to continue their support of the arts in Maryland. The arts provide public value and, undoubtedly, will help our state's economic and social and mental health recovery in the months and years ahead. The arts are indeed a beacon of joy and healing for communities, and now is the time to invest even more in our work. We are all deeply committed to serving our community in good and challenging times, and we have long appreciated the support provided by government leaders in Annapolis. With the continued investment in the arts sector, we can help build a more robust and creative community.



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Signed,

Christopher Bedford, The Baltimore Museum of Art
Rebecca Hoffberger, The American Visionary Art Museum
Monica Jeffries Hazangeles, Strathmore
Peter Kjome, The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Julia Marciari-Alexander, The Walters Art Museum
Michael Ross, Baltimore Center Stage
Jonathan Schwartz, The Modell Lyric
Ryan Rilette, Roundhouse Theater
Janet Stanford, Imagination Stage