



**THE NATIONAL
GREAT BLACKS
IN WAX MUSEUM** Inc

State Aided Educational Institutions (SAI) Testimony

Submitted to:

The Education, Business, and Administration Subcommittee

Submitted by:

The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Inc.

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At the core of Museum programming is our belief that museums can play a vital role in seeing that those children and their families affected by poverty, violence, and cultural disadvantage are offered effective informal educational experiences that support community and family learning.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted access to museum collections across the country and reduced the ability of museum professionals and educators to utilize the collections as part of their curriculum. For much of the SAI FY2020 funding period, traditional field trips were no longer feasible and public access was restricted.

Given the challenges posed by the pandemic, The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum sought to provide a safe learning environment for its patrons in both a physical and virtual space.

With \$37,861 in SAI funding, the Museum was able to achieve some critical objectives:

- Provide free or discounted onsite and online access to the rich history and culture presented in our one-of-a-kind museum. 2,614 students, 140 teachers, and 225 chaperones visited physically from Title I schools across the State and from programs which serve mainly low-income youth and families, and a typically underserved audience for museums. The Museum is currently developing tools to assess the impact and outcomes of virtual resources
- Design and make available a virtual museum tour that spans the collective experience of over 5,000 years of history, showcasing the rich history of African Americans across continents and across time, from Ancient Africa, the Middle Passage and Slavery, through Civil Rights and today
- Create effective partnerships
It is also important to create partnership opportunities designed to use the Museum as a context for engaging an increasingly diverse audience, including families and other nonschool audiences, especially underserved minority populations.

Three such partnerships have been forged. The newest of the three is with Empowerment Academy located in West Baltimore; a second is with Harford Heights Elementary, located in East Baltimore. The longest term partnership is with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

Collaborations with local organizations help us provide varied programs designed to serve our diverse audience.

Strong partnerships have been developed with four community organizations: The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, The Griot Circle of Maryland, the Juxtopia Group, and Discover ME/Recover ME.

Together we have merged our individual passions into one intention: To deepen the youth participants' understanding of such career fields as STEM by engaging them in a variety of activities appropriate for all ages. These include storytelling events, multi-session, onsite and online workshops and demonstrations for families and adults; weekend, summer and after-school outreach to the general public.

Teachers of a wide range of grade levels and various subject areas including history, art, science, reading and language arts, geography and social studies bring their students to the Museum because of the interdisciplinary nature of the exhibitions. For example, in the *STEMming the Tide of History* program, students learn the connection between such relevant facts as Inventor Granville T. Woods and e-mail, George Washington Carver and global warming, Madam C.J. Walker and door-to-door selling, and Dr. Charles Drew and convalescent plasma. This enriching program integrates African American history and STEM education as a learning tool for Middle School children.

Summary:

The funds provided through the SAI Grant program have made several innovations possible. The staffed Education Department, the new Museum Curriculum, and the outreach programs to students and their families, would not have been possible without the assistance of SAI funds. Maryland teachers, students, and parents have benefited from these initiatives as well as the support which enabled over 2,500 students and teachers to gain Museum admittance either free of charge to them or at a reduced rate.

Challenge:

FY 2020 funds started at \$42,068. Over a brief period these funds were reduced to \$37,861. We have now been informed that another 10% reduction is likely. The increased demands by schools throughout the State for more virtual offerings and interactive programs for the many schools operating remotely is compromising our ability to provide services to the children and schools with the most need and the least resources.

Restoring funding to the SAI organizations will help the Museum in its effort to invest in new digital learning resources, fill the funding gap created by the Coronavirus crisis, and continue to offer exemplary programming showcasing the achievements and legacy of African American people.

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The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum was founded in 1983 by Drs. Elmer P. and Joanne M. Martin

