

March 8, 2022

RE: HB 1048

Dear House Appropriations Committee Chair and Members,

Banneker-Douglass Museum is a critical and under-funded asset for the State of Maryland. The Museum's essential mission to document, interpret, and promote African-American history and culture through programs and exhibits helps all Marylanders and visitors gain a better understanding and appreciation of America's (particularly Maryland's) rich cultural diversity.

There has been no more important time, than this present moment in history, to connect all races and build new bridges together across our differences. Banneker-Douglass Museum is a bridge builder from the past's painful divisions and inequities to what we hope will be greater understanding among people of all races and more equal and just opportunities for African-Americans.

The Banneker-Douglass Museum budget is grossly underfunded by the State of Maryland. Not letting such obstacles stand in its way, Museum staff quickly pivoted all its programs to a virtual platform after the COVID shutdown in March 2020. For the next two years the skeleton staff worked exceptionally hard to reach many thousands of residents and visitors new to the Museum. Its programs are relevant, important, and incisive to our times. I always learn something every time I attend (now) or join a webinar.

After meeting Chanel Compton and getting to know her and the Commission's vision and talents, I became a four-figure donors and have asked many people (Black and White) to join my husband and me to help Banneker-Douglass Museum be an even great force for good in Maryland. Rapidly growing support from residents all over Maryland is now taking hold. The Museum is winning new awards for its collaboration and grants for its exhibits and programs. The funding of the Museum is a valuable public-private partnership. As the public more strongly steps forward with new support, the State of Maryland needs to do the same. I ask the Appropriations Committee and the Maryland Legislature to vote **YES** for the Senator Verda Welcome Act. Not only is this a fitting legacy for Sen Welcome, but it is an essential investment in the future of African-American History and Culture and in an anti-racist society for all of Maryland.

Sincerely,
Margaret B. Davis
Banneker-Douglass Museum Volunteer
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