



*Enrichment Through the African Oral Tradition*

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Maryland State Appropriations Committee  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis

To Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to express my favorable support for HB1048 (the Senator Verda Welcome Act), requesting the Governor to include in the annual budget \$1.6 million for the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture to increase the operational capacity of the Banneker-Douglass Museum. Additionally, it requests an appropriation of \$3 million to address the museum's urgent capital repairs.

### *History*

The Banneker-Douglass Museum, Maryland's official state museum on African American history and culture, is operated by the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (MCAAHC). The MCAAHC was founded in 1964 under the leadership of Maryland Senator Verda Freeman Welcome – the first Black woman senator in Maryland. Her vision was to develop a state commission to preserve and present Black history to inspire communities and help uproot racism in Maryland. The Commission established the Banneker-Douglass Museum (BDM) in Annapolis in 1984 to help carry out this vision. Today, the mission of the Banneker-Douglass Museum is needed more than ever.

### *Banneker-Douglass Museum's Work & Impact*

- For over 35 years, the Banneker-Douglass Museum has served as the State's official Museum on African American history and culture.
- The museum serves as a tremendous resource in the State's preservation and presentation of Black history and culture and reaches over 50,000 people through its onsite and virtual programs.
- The museum annually presents outstanding exhibitions, youth conferences, and symposiums to amplify Black history, art, culture, and critical social justice causes impacting Black communities in Maryland. In addition, the museum produces programs such as after-school programs and anti-racism community trainings.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum is a National Preservation Site and a National Underground Network to Freedom site.
- The museum provides professional development workshops and trainings to museum professionals, educators and other African American heritage sites.

- The museum preserves over 12,000 artifacts and objects in its newly renovated collections and research facility and Maryland State Archives.
- The museum presents virtual and onsite tours of their exhibitions, collections, and programs to people of all ages and backgrounds.

### *The Need*

**Banneker-Douglass Museum Operational and Capital Budget:** It is imperative to increase the Banneker-Douglass Museum's operating budget to \$1.6 million and address their \$3 million worth of capital repairs. The State's investment is critical to ensuring the museum's viability for Marylanders and its tourists.

**Capital Repairs include but are not limited to:**

- **HVAC System:** Nearly 20 years old, the system has surpassed its life expectancy, indicated by its constant need for repair from malfunction.
- **Elevator Repair:** The main elevator is often offline, thus rendering the museum inaccessible to the public. Also, the service elevator is entirely offline.
- **Technology Upgrades to Facility**
- **Update Permanent Exhibit** to include additional Maryland Black history, art, and cultural milestones.
- **Restoration to Original Wood Floors:** The historic wing of BDM was once Mt. Moriah AME Church, built-in 1874. The original wood floors require repair/restoration.

### *Operations*

The Banneker-Douglass Museum has been chronically under-resourced and staffed for years. The museum's operational budget needs to raise at a minimum of \$1.6 million. An average of 3% of their current budget supports exhibits, collections, public programs, and marketing efforts. Increased funding towards staffing, exhibitions, public & youth programs, collections management, and marketing is imperative to their operations and growth. Increasing the operational budget is critical to its viability and future existence. Increasing their budget to \$1.6 million will ensure that the Banneker-Douglass Museum's collection practices, exhibitions, and educational programming are sustained and thriving.

We hope the Maryland State Appropriations Committee will join us in investing in this effort.

In Solidarity and Justice,



David O. Fakunle, Ph.D.  
CEO, DiscoverME/RecoverME