

CORY V. McCRAY
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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 24, 2022

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 953
Commission on African American History and Culture – Alterations
(Senator Verda Welcome Act)

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

I write to urge you to **support** Senate Bill 953. It is crucially important that we invest in institutions that promote African American tradition and culture within the State of Maryland. Funding certain historical museums will assist in the preservation of history for future generations, so that they, too, understand the significance of African American history. This funding should be provided, in effect, through the implementation of Senate Bill 953.

State Senator Verda Freeman Welcome, the first Black woman senator in Maryland, founded the Banneker-Douglass Museum and the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (MCAAHC). In 1969, one year after Martin Luther King's assassination, her vision was to develop a State commission to preserve and share Black history and help uproot and diminish racism in Maryland. The Commission established the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis in 1984 to help carry out this vision. The museum serves as a tremendous resource, reaching 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 trainings for museum professionals and teachers.

Under Senate Bill 953, the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (MCAAHC) will become an independent unit within the Executive Branch. Additionally, it provides additional funding for the commission, the Banneker-Douglass Museum, and the African American Heritage Preservation (AAHP) Program. Increasing their annual operational budget and addressing their capital repairs will ensure that these museum's collection practices, exhibitions, and educational programming are sustained and thriving.

If enacted, Senate Bill 953 would take effect July 1, 2022, and will require that certain practices be adopted in accordance with the law.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 953. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray
State Senator, 45th District