

Testimony – SB683
Olney Theatre Center
Dennis A. Blackledge
Owners Representative
dblackledge@olneytheatre.org
(301) 924-4485 x131

The Olney Theatre Center is a not-for-profit performing arts theatre located in Montgomery County at 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney MD. 20832.

The Olney Theatre was founded more than 80-years ago as a summer theatre, and over time has grown to an annual operating budget of \$8,000,000, 40 fulltime employees, and many individual contractors. Although we are now a year-round operation, we are proud of our designation as the Official Summer Theatre of Maryland.

Our 14-acre campus currently has three theatres: the recently renovated Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab (150 seats), 1938 Original Theatre (450 seats), and the Main Stage (420 seats). OTC also has an outdoor summer stage, the Root Family Stage, home to a variety of performances during evening hours in the summer, and capable of accommodating up to 400 patrons. Also on the property: the Crawford House for Administrative Staff and residents, as well Production Facilities abutting the Original Theatre for scenery, properties, costumes, lighting, sound, and projections. Our buildings combine for approximately 80,000 square feet of indoor space.

OTC is currently examining plans to renovate existing facilities, and add much needed space for Education programs, and Production. Much of our equipment at all levels, including HVAC is from previous generations and showing its age, and inefficiencies. During preliminary planning sessions we investigated the possibility of converting the campus to geo-thermal energy, considering it the best long-term plan for efficiency, the environment, our staff, patrons, and community. Initial cost projections of \$1,000,000 makes this a daunting expenditure, and it obligates us to also look at less effective, but more affordable systems. The \$1,000,000 figure was calculated in 2019, and no doubt those costs have increased significantly.

The Olney Theatre supports Senator Cheryl C. Kagan and SB683. While still too early in our process for OTC to know for sure that thermal will be our future solution, it would be great to know that this bill could make it an option for us where otherwise it might not be. I am confident that this is also true for many other not-for-profit organizations. Thank you.

Dennis A. Blackledge