

Testimony for SB245—Nonprofit Interest-Free Micro Bridge Loan (NIMBL) Funding
Nancy L. Easterling

I am Nancy Easterling, the Executive Director for Historic Sotterley, Inc., located in St. Mary's County, Maryland. For those of you who do not know Historic Sotterley (and if not, you need to come down for a visit!), our nonprofit runs a 300 year old National Historic Landmark and historic museum site which interprets our complex, and often difficult, shared history. With a full range of programming to include education programs and field trips, tours, cultural events, recreational opportunities, a working farm that donates produce to our local community, our Common Ground Initiative supported by our Descendant community, and much more. Historic Sotterley is truly an exceptional educational and cultural resource for our community, our State and our Nation.

Historic Sotterley is unlike many museums, however, in that it is not owned by a county, state or federal government, and it does not have an endowment to support its operations. This means we need to earn and work for every dollar that supports our efforts, and this makes for a pencil-thin budget with often no reserve accounts to serve as a cushion. Grants are one of the few ways we have been able to make important projects and advancements possible over the years, but most government grants work on a reimbursement basis which makes it difficult for small organizations like ours. It can sometimes take months and months after paying a bill to work our way through the reimbursement process, and usually we do not have funds in reserve to fall back on. We have had to draw on our operational line of credit which then incurs interest payments we will not be reimbursed for, and have even had to delay paying other bills when funds became too tight.

When this NIMBL program became available, I applied for it right away, and in fact to date we have used it twice. The first time was for a \$100,000 Bond Bill from the State, and while we were about halfway through the project at the time we applied, it was getting harder and harder to make cash-flow work. The NIMBL funds did not see us entirely through the project, but it helped us through a difficult period. We applied for our second loan to support our \$100,000 African American Heritage Preservation Program grant, and this time we had to wait until others repaid their loans before funds could be made available since the pool of funds was so small. I quickly went through the \$25,000, but I had to pay it back as soon as I received our grant reimbursements and could not continue to recycle these funds throughout the course of the grant. I am incredibly grateful to have received both loans, but if more funds had been available for this program, perhaps either the loan amounts could have been increased, or repayment of smaller loans could wait until all grant funds have been expended, allowing nonprofits to recycle these funds throughout the course of the grant and ease with cash flow.

The Nonprofit Interest-Free Micro Bridge Loan has been a godsend to Sotterley and it can be the same thing for many other nonprofits, all of which are serving our communities. I ask that you increase the funding for NIMBL, and know that by doing so, you are investing in the important and critical work of so many nonprofits which support our State and its citizens.

Historic Sotterley Inc's Mission: Preserve our historic structures and natural environment and use the powerful stories of our land, lives, and labor to bring American history to life while serving as an educational and cultural resource.