

Maryland General Assembly Senate Finance Committee

Hearing: Thursday, February 16, 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Dear Madam Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to ask you to reject Senate Bill 284, "Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining," filed by Senator Jill P. Carter.

As the chair of the Board's Development Committee, my particular focus is on the potential and likely impact that the overly broad and vague language of SB 284 will have on our work raising private funds to support the Walters' operations now and in the future. **More than 75% of the museum's annual operating budget comes through private philanthropy:** funds raised each year, and funds contributed to our operating endowment.

Yet the bill that Senator Carter has put forward redefines the Walters as "a unit and instrumentality of the state and the city," without addressing the future source of the museum's operating funds. **Am I to assume that the 75% of our budget that the Trustees help to raise each year will now be allocated for by the City's and the State's respective budget processes?** Why are these funds not mentioned in the Fiscal and Policy Note submitted by the Department of Legislative Services? Similarly, SB 284 risks jeopardizing the relationship-building work that the museum has done with the wider community, which is so integral to fundraising and audience development.

Many members of the Maryland General Assembly are themselves involved with and privately supportive of any number of nonprofit organizations in this state. Therefore, you may know that the fundraising landscape can be competitive—and that an organization's clarity of mission and operating structure is essential to the process of securing major gifts. **No donor wants to give to an entity that may not use their funds as intended, or one that has its funds seized by the government.**

On the subject of labor relations, SB 284 is not necessary. Employees and management are currently negotiating a voluntary recognition agreement. But it would be both upsetting and deeply ironic if, in passing Senator Carter's bill, the General Assembly ends up demolishing the very jobs it is aiming to help through this odd piece of legislation that would gut the private sector's support for the museum, which would have significant ramifications for its budget—and its employees.

Please reconsider advancing this bill.

Betsey L. B. Todd, Chair, Development Committee
Board of Trustees, The Walters Art Museum