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Maryland General Assembly
Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this letter as written testimony in support of Senate Bill 0616 for the Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program (MAP) at the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT).

I represent Maryland Humanities and am excited to see an important program revived that supports our state's history museums, historical societies, and community archives that serve countless Marylanders and steward irreplaceable connections to our diverse history. If recognized, this reactivation of MAP would build urgently needed capacity within Maryland's network of underfunded yet vitally important history museums.

Maryland's cultural leaders have been working together strategically to identify the gaps in funding for organizations in Maryland. Maryland Humanities' SHINE program, also being heard before this committee, focuses on smaller organizations, many of whom are not eligible for SHINE funding as they are not museums or historical societies and instead fall into categories such as cultural awareness organizations, organizations building community through consensus and dialogue, arts and humanities programming for underserved youth, organizations working at the intersection of nature and the humanities, literary organizations, and cultural preservation through music history.

Meanwhile, MAP is another essential piece of the puzzle and has a strong history of serving history museums by providing operating grants, technical assistance, and networking opportunities from 1991 until 2011 – when the funding stopped. In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly required a report by MHT regarding museum and preservation funding. The report's top recommendation was to reinstitute and fund MAP, which is still in statute at MHT despite receiving no funding for 12 years. Without this essential and steady support, history museums of all sizes struggle to maintain baseline operations.

Our larger institutions struggle with frequent staff turnover losing invaluable institutional knowledge to state and federal cultural agencies offering higher salaries and benefits. In the worst-case scenarios, museums have radically reduced their operations or shutdown altogether due to a lack of support and failing infrastructure. Our network of history museums is a critical part of the necessary work to bolster our larger cultural infrastructure in Maryland, but we need the State of Maryland's support to continue our innovation and public service, leaving no history behind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay Baker".

Chief Executive Officer
Maryland Humanities