

Written testimony for Maryland Historical Trust – Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program-Funding (HB0688)

February 6, 2024

Maryland General Assembly
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter as written testimony in support of an \$5M appropriation in FY 2025 for the Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program (MAP) at the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) as presented in Senate Bill 0616. As Executive Director of Howard County Lynching Truth & Reconciliation, Inc., I can attest to our struggle for funding to continue doing the things that we've been doing in Howard County and the state to create a more balanced historical narrative for students, residents and visitors. We've never been a recipient of MAP funds and we understand their funding stopped in 2011, but we are a history nonprofit that has a stake in this.

A community research effort created via a process I called Roundtable Truth Lab led to the return of critically important Black History for and to our state: the accurate story of the log house in Ellicott City that had actually been built by a free Mulatto man named Levi Gillis for his wife Eliza Jane and their children around the year 1851! That finding led to our published book, which led to a small MHAA grant to continue the research, which led to amazing findings coming soon to our students, visitors and residents. While we operate to try to assist our county government in "doing history" for residents etc in ways that are engaging to capture the attention of increasingly demanding consumers, we also must LIVE in a state that has the highest housing costs around. While I love what I do, nonprofits like ours need assistance to do the work we're doing to benefit our local jurisdictions and state. History is far more than just a graduation requirement, and there's much to be done to undo prior damage from unbalanced narratives that leave critically important parts out. Come to Ellicott City this year after April and see/hear the new story of Levi and his family while standing in his house that's currently on Main Street and Ellicott's Mills Drive. WE did that, and we have more! Please help us to do it.

Sincerely,

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