

Testimony

Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland Senate

February 6, 2024

Allegany Museum

Statement of Victor S. Rezendes
Vice President Administration
Allegany Museum
3 Pershing Street
Cumberland, Maryland

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

The Allegany Museum strongly supports SB 0616 which authorizes the Governor beginning in fiscal year 2025 and each fiscal year thereafter, to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$5,000,000 to the Maryland Historical Trust to be used to provide grants to museums under the Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program.

The Allegany Museum is also an education organization. It is well known that Allegany County is an economically challenged area of Maryland due to industrial downsizing and closures. We support the goal of providing comprehensive childhood services for children and their families to promote academic achievement and creativity through student literacy, cultural, art and history experiences. We participate in the Allegany County Public School's extended day program as a partner. The Allegany Museum provides staff and/or volunteers at the Museum to present a variety of historical informational exhibits and hands-on art activities, literacy, history and music activities.

Allegany Museum is helping promote Maryland as a destination for heritage tourism. Currently, over 60 percent of our visitors are from out of State. Tourism gives the area an essential economic boost and creates pride in the region's history. One of every ten jobs in Allegany County is now related to our tourist industry. Allegany Museum is also integral to the Cumberland Arts and Entertainment District. We currently are the second poorest county in the state so many of our local visitors are below the poverty level. Over 65% of the children in our county's school are eligible for USDA free school lunch reimbursement. A couple of the schools we host are at the 100% level. We believe heritage tourism can play a vital role in revitalization of our community.

Each year the Museum barely covers operating expenses. We are a volunteer non-profit organization. The proposed legislation would give the Museum some much needed financial support. We appreciate your continued support in empowering local tourism organizations in their quest to make Maryland a top tourist destination.