



TESTIMONY TO THE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE

SB 616 - Maryland Historical Trust - Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program - Funding  
POSITION: Support

Submitted By: Maya Davis, Vice Chair Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

Date: February 6, 2024

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. I represent the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture which works with museums across the state of Maryland. On this Commission I specifically represent the constituency of museum professionals, visitors, and stakeholders in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Over the years the Commission has provided technical support and capital grants for the 400 history museums, historical societies, and community archives in the state that serve countless Marylanders and steward irreplaceable connections to our diverse history. The reactivation of MAP funding would build urgently needed capacity within Maryland's network of underfunded yet vitally important history and culture museums.

As an individual who has worked directly with most of the museums in our state and a museum professional, I can say that many museums within our state have struggled with frequent staff turnover, losing invaluable institutional knowledge due to nearby 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. During this time of heightened racial tensions, an increase in crime amongst our youth, and the need to be more community centered, Maryland can be a national leader in driving community centered work through its museums, advancing inclusive, accurate, and empowering opportunities to engage with history. Our network of history and culture museums is a critical part of the necessary work to bolster our larger cultural infrastructure in Maryland.

We urge you to support Senate Bill 616 to fund the Museum Assistance Program.

Sincerely,

Maya Davis

Vice Chair, Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture

84 Franklin Street, Annapolis, MD 21401