



January 26, 2024

HOUSE BILL 0390—FAV
SENATE BILL 0341—FAV

Ms. Kristen Pironis
Executive Director
Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
26 West Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County wholeheartedly endorses and is in favor of **Senate Bill 341 Commission on African American History and Culture—Museum Name Change** for the Banneker-Douglass Museum to **Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum**.

The Banneker-Douglass Museum is located in Annapolis and has an award-winning partnership with Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County, Black History 365 project (www.visitannapolis.org/black-history-365). The museum is one of the top visitor attractions in Anne Arundel County and we market it to the 6.8 million visitors who spend \$3.8 billion locally providing \$427 million in state and local taxes and work with the Maryland Office of Tourism to market it to the 43.5 million visitors to the state who spend \$19.4 billion, generating \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes. [Source: Tourism Economics *Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland 2022* report]

The proposed name change to include Harriet Tubman is appropriate and is right.

The name recognizes Maryland-native and renowned Freedom Fighter Harriet Tubman to the name of the State's official museum of African American heritage. The addition of her name to the museum's name highlights her strong connection to her homeland and makes the name of the museum more inclusive by including a woman. It also builds upon the State of Maryland's multi-year major investments to showcase and provide places to learn about Harriet Tubman with the development and marketing of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Park, a partnership with the Maryland State Parks and National Park Service, and the nationally recognized Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway.

It celebrates Tubman and her life's work of freedom and justice for all, which until only recently has been researched and accurately told. Today the research continues to be uncovered through archaeology on the Eastern Shore.

Further, the museum name serves as a reminder to everyone where we have failed in the past as a nation in terms of freedom, equality, civil rights, inclusion, and justice; where we are today, and where we need to be tomorrow. Each time we see her name it inspires each of us to ask ourselves, “what am I going to do today to honor the legacy of Harriet Tubman?”

Fredrick Douglass himself acknowledged the public spotlight he was always in versus Harriet Tubman when he wrote her a letter in 1868, “The difference between us is very marked. Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day—you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scared, and foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt, ‘God bless you,’ has been your only reward. The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witness of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism.”

As a partner organization, Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County stands alongside the Banneker-Douglass Museum and the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture in its mission to create a more equitable and inclusive society by celebrating the rich tapestry of African American heritage with the addition of Harriet Tubman’s name to the Banneker-Douglass Museum. We hope you will support this simple name change that will undoubtedly offer profound and long-term positive impacts. Together, we all can continue to empower communities, amplify underrepresented voices, and inspire future generations to embrace the profound legacy of African Americans in Maryland.

Let’s have more than the midnight sky and the silent stars know Harriet Tubman’s devotion to freedom—let’s shout it from the capital of Maryland and rename the State of Maryland’s official museum of African American heritage the Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristen Pironis", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kristen Pironis
Executive Director