



February 21, 2025

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: FAVORABLE - House Bill 1010 *African American Heritage Preservation Program and Grant Fund - Noncapital Grants and Donations*

Dear Chair Barnes and Distinguished Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (MCAAHC), I write to express our strong support for House Bill 1010. I want to begin by expressing my profound gratitude to Speaker Adrienne Jones for her leadership in sponsoring this vital legislation.

For over 50 years, MCAAHC has worked diligently to preserve and present Black history and culture as instruments for education, community empowerment, and social change. Since its inception, the African American Heritage Preservation Program (AAHPP) capital grant has successfully funded 210 preservation projects, rescuing crucial aspects of Maryland's history from disrepair and potential loss.

While the AAHPP capital grant program has been transformative, we've identified a critical gap: many of Maryland's African American heritage sites operate with limited hours and volunteer staff. These sites need operational support, not just capital improvements, to reach their full potential.

House Bill 1010 addresses this need by establishing a Non-Capital Grant Fund that will:

- Enable heritage sites to build capacity through staff development and training
- Support educational programming that shares Maryland's rich African American history
- Fund essential operational costs to increase site accessibility to residents and tourists

The FY2024 increase in AAHPP capital funding to \$5 million generated over \$30 million in eligible applications, demonstrating the overwhelming need in this sector. This Non-Capital Grant

Fund represents the next logical step in Maryland's commitment to preserving and promoting our complete history.

I extend my sincere appreciation to this committee for your consideration and ongoing support of Maryland's cultural heritage. Your leadership in this effort positions Maryland to continue setting the national standard for inclusive historical preservation and interpretation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chanel C. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Chanel C. Johnson
Executive Director
Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture