



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

Dear Delegates,

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 recommended in House Bill 0688.

The Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) stewards the state’s largest historical collection inclusive of over seven million archival works and 350,000 objects. This collection informs twelve rotating museum galleries, K-12 educational programs, research services, and publications that annually serve over 100,000 people in every Maryland county. Despite our stewardship and activation of this irreplaceable resource that tells our state’s story, MCHC is acutely under-resourced in comparison to peer museums and repositories in other sectors such as higher education and the fine arts. In a typical year without special appropriations, government support of any kind makes up just 3% of our operating budget. Despite diverse revenue streams, maintaining a balanced budget along with the staff, facilities, and procedures that provide the quality care our collections deserve is a constant challenge.

Greater state support is needed for a sustainable MCHC and, most importantly, for our sector at large. The challenges of MCHC are mirrored across our sector with historical societies and museums across the state struggling to retain staff and care for their collections. That support should come from MAP at MHT. MAP served history museums by providing operating grants, technical assistance, and networking opportunities from 1991 until 2011 – when the funding stopped.

Maryland has the opportunity to be a national leader in advancing inclusive, accurate, and empowering opportunities to engage with history. Our network of history museums is a critical part of the necessary work to bolster our larger cultural infrastructure in Maryland, but we need the State of Maryland’s support to continue our innovation and public service, leaving no history behind. This is especially needed as we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026. Neighboring states such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania already provided operating grants

for history museums that far outpaced Maryland's investment. As we approach this important anniversary, they are doubling down on their support. Through the reestablishment of MAP, Maryland will be well poised to celebrate its diverse and important role in our national story.

We ask that the committee make one amendment to this bill which currently excludes beneficiaries of Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) grants from applying to the MAP program. Current appropriations for MSAC operating grants are over triple that being requested for MAP. Many historical museums are multidisciplinary. Equitable funding strategies for both MAP and MSAC grants could be determined through a funding formula or other means aside from exclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Caljean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "C" at the end.

Katie Caljean
President & CEO