



March 26, 2024

**Testimony on House Bill 688**

**Maryland Historical Trust - Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program – Funding  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is the only association advocating for the 40,000 nonprofit organizations in Maryland. With our nearly 2,000 members, we advocate for greater quality of life and equity. Maryland Nonprofits urges a favorable report on House Bill 688 to fund the Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program at the Maryland Historical Trust.

The over 450 nonprofit museums in Maryland are not merely repositories of history; they are vibrant community centers that foster education, understanding, and inclusivity. By supporting SB 688, we seize a pivotal opportunity to enhance the operational capacity of Maryland’s historical and cultural museums, many of which are grappling with financial vulnerabilities exacerbated by the recent pandemic.

The proposed \$5 million allocation for the Museum Assistance Program (MAP) in the FY 2025 operating budget is a strategic investment in our shared cultural infrastructure. This funding will empower museums to offer competitive wages, thereby attracting and retaining top talent; implement necessary upgrades to facilities ensuring the preservation of invaluable collections; expand outreach initiatives to engage diverse community voices; and innovate programming that brings Maryland’s rich history to life for all its residents.

As passed by the House of Delegates, House Bill 688 differs from Senate Bill 616 that you have already approved. House Bill 688 includes a provision that would allow otherwise eligible institutions that also receive operating assistance from the Maryland State Arts Council, to benefit from this new source of support. **We strongly endorse that change and urge you to retain it in acting on House Bill 688.**

Groups that would qualify It would be a shame if MAP recipients could not benefit from the Arts Capital Grant program, some of their COVID relief funds, and other opportunities that have more recently been available to historical organizations as well. We believe that state agencies would be able to refine their own eligibility criteria in a more flexible way as opposed to having a mandate in the law.

The importance of this funding cannot be overstated at a time when access to comprehensive and inclusive historical education is under threat. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, our museums must be equipped to share the multifaceted stories of our state and nation, promoting understanding and dialogue across communities.



Maryland Nonprofits urges you to recognize the essential role that museums play in our society by supporting House Bill 688. By doing so, we can provide these institutions with the stability needed to thrive and continue their mission of education and preservation.



*30 YEARS STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONS FOR GREATER QUALITY OF LIFE AND EQUITY*

