

**S50B01**

# **Reginald F. Lewis Museum 2019 Budget Hearing Testimony**



830 E. Pratt Street \*Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
443-263-1800 \* [www.lewismuseum.org](http://www.lewismuseum.org)  
IG/ Twitter: @lewismuseum

Maryland African American Museum Corporation  
Hearing Testimony – FY19

February 7, 2019

The Maryland African American Museum Corporation (MAAMC), known as the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, is one of the largest museums on the east coast dedicated to the preservation of the African American cultural experience. A longstanding Smithsonian Affiliate, we have a core collection of more than 10,000 objects, artifacts, documents, and photographs that span 400 years of Maryland history housed in an 82,000 square foot building which opened in 2005.

The museum is pleased to report that under the leadership of Executive Director Wanda Draper and her senior management team, the museum continued to show steady improvement in its operations in FY18. The following represents comparisons of July 1 – December 31, 2018 (FY19) with July 1 – December 31, 2017 (FY18):

- **Overall attendance** for FY18 was 47,580 as compared to 48,775 for FY17, declining just 2.5% after several years of significant growth. Attendance in FY19 (Jul – Dec) was 26,523 as compared to 23,251 for the same time in FY18, an increase of 14%. Attendance by category was as follows for FY18 and FY17:

General Admission	19,819	20,128
K-12 Tours	7,154	7,615
Adult Tour Groups	1,549	1,571
Special Events	17,265	16,641
Educational Meetings	384	610
Public Programs (Ticketed)	1,409	2,210
Total	47,580	48,775

Note: We had 145 volunteers that provided 1,814 volunteer hours.  
In FY19 we have begun to track our students by specific county.

- **School attendance**, an institutional priority, **increased by 28%** in FY18 compared to FY17. In the first two quarters of FY19, we are tracking to sustain those numbers. We are working with local cultural partners to engage more students in the exhibitions and collections at the museum.

- **Museum fundraising revenue (Revenue)** for the six months ending December 31 is \$1,011,700 in FY19 compared to \$902,300, in FY18 a **12% increase**. These amounts are exclusive of funding received from the State of Maryland (State Funding) and endowment performance. It should also be noted that the FY19 Revenue to date exceeds the State Funding of \$979,500.
- **Museum Store gross sales** were \$99,000 in FY18 as compared with \$38,000 in FY17. For the first six months of FY19, gross sales for the Museum store were \$59,600, a **35% increase** over the same time period last year.
- **Special Events sales (building space rentals) of \$133,500** represent a slight increase over FY18 and are on track to reach FY19 goal of \$250,000.
- **Membership numbers** in FY18 remained stable compared to FY17, while **membership revenue increased 12%** indicating that members are renewing at higher levels of membership. We attribute this directly to our increased membership outreach along with expanded exhibition and program offerings.
- **FY19's Social Media hits** to date on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have **increased 9%, 21%, and 30%**, respectively over FY18.
- **Maryland Collects exhibition series** was extremely successful in FY18 with ***Maryland Collects: Jacob Lawrence***. Following that success, the Museum mounted our second exhibition in the series ***Maryland Collects: Romare Bearden: Visionary Artist***, November 10, 2018 – March 3, 2019. It has already attracted a diverse audience and was reviewed favorably in the *Baltimore Sun*, *The Baltimore Times*, and the *Afro*, *BMore Art* and various other media outlets.
- **Digitizing the collection** is a priority for the Museum, making it accessible to visitors throughout Maryland. In the first six months of FY19, the Museum debuted an **On-Line Collections Portal** on our website with 1,092 objects available for viewing. We are one of the few African American museums to have a searchable collections database online.
- **Energy Efficiency** has seen **substantial progress in** partnership with BGE's Green Initiative by replacing incandescent light bulbs with LED lighting. In addition, a grant allowed us to install a state-of-the-art Lutron Lighting System which will better automate and manage the building's lighting systems and resultant energy usage.

In FY19, the museum has continued to increase its partnerships with corporations, cultural and community organizations. Our annual Children's Book Fair, held in May 2018, featured authors and illustrators of African American children's books, partnerships with the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and attracted 1,272 visitors. A rotating series of exhibitions curated by local photographer Joe Giordano *Reflections of Baltimore* showcased new Baltimore-based artists, including six painters from MICA, experimental artists Wickerham & Lomax, and Baltimore street photographers who showcase their work on Instagram. In the first two quarters of FY19, we established a year-long "Health and Wellness" partnership with Kaiser Permanente, and Bank of America became the sole corporate sponsor of our major fall special exhibition, *Romare Bearden: Visionary Artist*. In conjunction with that exhibition, a book talk on Bearden and a dramatic presentation on Homer's Odyssey by Morgan State University's Theater Morgan attracted nearly 200 visitors.

Earlier this year we held an exhibition, *Hateful Things*, which garnered the attention of press and captivated school audiences. Educator and OSI Community Fellow Dr. LaMarr Shields facilitated education workshops for teens on negative stereotypes in connection with *Hateful Things*. About 600 students participated. In partnership with 21st Century Fox, the museum invited 200 students and teachers to view the movie "The Hate You Give." Our annual Kwanzaa celebration on December 29, 2018 had 1,639 visitors in attendance. Programs such as these have allowed the museum to be flexible and responsive to contemporary topics and establish itself as a place for safe and open dialogue and discussion. A highlight of FY19 programming was our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual High School Juried Art Show which included an exhibition of works by 22 high school students from 7 counties across Maryland. Programs and exhibitions for the remainder of FY19 will continue to engage the public in creative and innovative ways.

Today, the Lewis Museum is screening a timely Smithsonian film, a documentary on the Green Book not to be confused with the movie currently in theaters. This film presents the history of the Negro Motorist Green Book produced by Victor Green during the Jim Crow era, 1936-1966.

We are proud that the Reginald F. Lewis Museum has made significant progress in FY19. Our continuing efforts revolve around a focused plan to address issues facing many 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural institutions. The plan involves:

- ***Fiscal Management & Compliance*** - by displaying and maintaining sound fiscal responsibility, and achieving regulatory compliance practices;
- ***Advancement*** - by promoting financial development and backing among corporations, foundations and individuals supportive of the mission;

- ***Education & Scholarship*** – by creating a compelling history and interpretive experience for visitors through scholarly exhibitions that appeal to the non-specialist, and broad appealing public programs that expand the notion of Maryland’s African American history, art and culture for diverse audiences;
- ***Community Engagement*** – by strengthening community partnerships with local constituents and national stakeholders;
- ***Branding & Positioning*** – by developing new marketing strategies that support the vision statement and promote cultural branding through the development of unique exhibitions and creative programs.

As the Museum continues to manage towards success, we forged a year-long relationship with Kaiser Permanente as our health and wellness partner. Additional partners include Bank of America, the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA), Visit Baltimore, the Bloomberg Fellowship Program, Arts Every Day, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Historical Society, The Walters Art Museum, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Towson University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland College Park, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Morgan State University, Galerie Myrtis, the Enoch Pratt Free Public Library, and a host of local community artists and activists.

We are grateful for the Board of Directors unwavering commitment to the Museum’s success, and the elected representatives of this great State, who have remained stalwart. The State’s continued recognition of us as Maryland’s premier museum dedicated to the history and culture of African Americans resonates as an edifice of pride and community achievement.

Most recently, the February 2019 edition of *Essence Magazine*, a monthly magazine for African American women, listed the Reginald F. Lewis Museum as one of the top 10 museums to visit during Black History Month. In doing so, the national publication is recognizing the Museum’s importance as a gatekeeper of African American history and culture in Maryland.

We are thankful to the State of Maryland for its past support and look forward to continued support through future State allocations.



