



**Date:** March 7, 2023

**Bill:** HB 201 – Creation of a State Debt – M.C.C.B.L. of 2023

**Item:** Miscellaneous – ZA00 – National Aquarium in Baltimore

**Position:** Approve \$3 million in FY 2024

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The National Aquarium concurs with the DLS recommendation and requests a **favorable report for the \$3 million included in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget for the National Aquarium**. These funds will support critical infrastructure projects at the National Aquarium, allowing us to address necessary repairs to our 40-year-old building.

The National Aquarium maintains a rigorous eight-year Capital Improvement Plan outlining over \$90 million in capital needs. In FY 2024 alone, the National Aquarium will spend approximately \$9 million on critical infrastructure and other capital needs. State funding in FY 2024 will be directed to the replacement of the flat Pier 4 membrane roof, our top priority, as well as completing pump room repairs and repairing a failing concrete exhibit. In the months since we submitted our capital request to the state, the cost to complete the Pier 4 roof replacement has increased by more than \$1.5 million, to \$2.7 million. The dramatic increase is primarily due to rising labor and material costs and unanticipated but necessary expansions in the project scope.

The National Aquarium originally planned to make public safety improvements to our campus in FY 2024, including upgrading to a new exterior lighting system, installing security camera infrastructure, and securing and repairing loading docks along the promenade. However, due to the increased cost of the Pier 4 membrane roof replacement, the National Aquarium will not be able to proceed with critical public safety improvements without additional state support. These public safety upgrades are critical to improving the safety of the National Aquarium's campus, our guests, and our staff. Deferring these projects another year, at a time when concern about safety is growing, would be detrimental to the National Aquarium. As such, **we have requested an additional \$1 million in supplemental funding from Governor Moore to allow us to proceed with critical public safety upgrades on our campus in FY 2024**. This brings the total requested amount for FY 2024 to \$4 million.

The National Aquarium's capital infrastructure needs are substantial and without the state's continued investment, the Aquarium could be faced with an unsustainable accumulation of critical capital needs that will adversely impact our ability to attract visitors and generate economic impact in the state of Maryland. Out year funding is critical for us to move forward responsibly with the multi-year projects needed to manage our infrastructure needs. **We request the committee recognize the Aquarium's outyear funding needs and consider preauthorizing \$3 million per year in the through FY 2028 for ongoing critical infrastructure improvements**. Presently, the National Aquarium is in the CIP for \$1 million per year.

For almost 42 years, the National Aquarium has been a reliable anchor for Baltimore and Maryland's tourism industry. Since 2019, the National Aquarium has generated **\$1.3 billion** in economic activity, generated **\$109 million** in state & local tax revenue, and supported an average of **2,600 jobs** per year.

We are grateful for the State's continued support. Without it, we would not be one of America's top aquariums—nor could we provide generations of Marylanders with an unequalled cultural and educational resource. **We respectfully request that the Committee support the full \$3 million included in the FY 2024 Capital Budget and consider the National Aquarium's additional capital needs in FY 2024 and beyond.**

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