

Maryland African American Museum Corporation (dba The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture)
Testimony Response to Legislative Analysis
Thursday, February 22, 2024
Submitted by: Terri Lee Freeman, President

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture agrees with the legislative analyst's report for the fiscal year 2023. The mission of the Museum is to document, interpret and preserve the complex experiences, contributions and culture of Black people. We serve as a catalyst for sustained change by providing programs and exhibitions and bold conversations that educate and challenge.

As reported by our Analyst, Micah Richardson, the challenge for the Museum during fiscal 2023 was revenue. While we exceeded our individual giving and earned income projections for fiscal year 2023, we significantly underperformed in corporate and foundation contributions for the same time frame. Several things contributed to this underperformance. First, we over budgeted for contributed revenue. In recent years, the museum's corporate contributions, outside of gala fundraising, have been in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000. The two exception years were 2021 and 2022 when funding from Guinness added \$400,000 to the bottomline and PPE loans were provided and forgiven for the institution. Additionally, our fundraising efforts were hampered by staffing constraints. New development staff were hired in March 2023. Finally, we anticipated a few grants that we did not receive, those proposals totaled \$150,000 of which only \$30,000 was secured.

In 2024, we have right-sized our projections anticipating approximately \$400,000 from corporations. While our staff costs were higher in FY'23, we still underspent our total budget. It is important for the Legislature to understand what we were able to accomplish in FY'23. In addition to presenting exhibits on Afro-futurism and Frederick Douglas, we instituted a new data collection system throughout the organization. We implemented planned professional development for all staff with a focus on basic skills and team building. We launched a weekly e-newsletter that is distributed to a list of approximately 29,000. We began outreach to Prince George's, Talbot and Montgomery counties to expand our statewide reach. We utilized a partnership strategy that connected us to local nonprofit organizations with relative missions and worked in collaboration with them (Greater Baltimore Urban League, Black Girls Vote, Black Maternal Healthcare Coalition, The Squeegee Collaborative). We offered community-based services through our fall festival, book festival and our summer field trip Fridays. Our school group visits increased by 36.5%. We worked on a project with

the University of Maryland to help teachers develop their curriculum for teaching African American History and posted those lesson plans on our website. And we led two teacher-training clinics for Baltimore City and Howard county. Finally, we delivered a successful gala fundraising/branding event.