



February 6, 2025

Education, Business, & Administration Subcommittee
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Greetings Madam Chair and members of the committee,

I would first like to thank Budget Analyst Yashodhara Rai for her presentation of our agency's budget.

As Executive Director for the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, I am proud to report that with the support of the general assembly, on November 1, Maryland Emancipation Day, we renamed our state's museum to the Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum.

Adding Harriet Tubman as our namesake, our museum stands as a beacon of courage and resilience, honoring humanity's greatest freedom fighter and elevating the profound contributions of Black women to our state, our nation, and the enduring fight for justice.

In 2024, our agency launched Maryland's Year of Civil Rights, marking the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Maryland's legacy in the civil rights movement runs deep - from Bell vs. Maryland to the Treaty of Cambridge, and through transformative leaders like Senator Verda Freeman Welcome, Chief Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray. Through exhibitions, programs, and partnerships, we're connecting this powerful history to contemporary conversations about justice and equality.

Our impact on Maryland's youth is particularly meaningful. Our youth and after-school programs are inspiring the next generation of thoughtleaders by connecting them to Maryland history, giving them a pride of place, and empowering them through creative expression. These programs have become a vital resource for schools across the state, helping young people understand their role in shaping Maryland's future.

We're also leading groundbreaking initiatives like the Ancestral Remains project, a sacred undertaking to properly memorialize and honor 13 African American ancestors whose remains were discovered in Maryland, dating back to the 18th century. This work exemplifies our commitment to dignity, respect, and healing in addressing historical injustices.

This year, as we develop our five-year plan, we're reimagining how a museum can serve Maryland and its tourists in new and exciting ways; through enhanced spaces for dialogue, expanded preservation efforts, and deeper community partnerships. Our team of eleven dedicated professionals works tirelessly to ensure Maryland remains at the forefront of preserving and celebrating African American heritage.

Your support of our FY2026 budget will strengthen Maryland's position as a national leader in preserving and celebrating African American heritage, ensuring these vital stories continue to inspire future generations.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chanel C. Johnson".

Chanel C. Johnson
Executive Director
Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture