

Maryland African American Museum Corporation (MAAMC)
(dba Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture)
Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget
Response to the Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Budget & Taxation Committee
Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee
Senator Nancy J. King, Chair
February 16, 2026

Appropriations Committee
Education & Economic Development Subcommittee
Delegate Stephanie M. Smith, Chair
February 12, 2026

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture (The Lewis) agrees with the legislative analyst's report for the fiscal year 2027. The Museum's mission remains the same, to document, interpret and preserve the complex experiences, contributions and culture of Black people in Maryland. We serve as a catalyst for sustained change by providing programs and exhibitions and bold conversations that educate and challenge.

Legislative Analyst Connor Brown met with me at the Museum to better understand the work of the organization. At the time, he had the opportunity to visit the three new exhibits that were opened during fiscal 2025. Two of the three exhibits were partially paid for with operating funds, some of which were received from the state. Those exhibits were iWitness: Media and the Movement, a review of the contributions of Black Marylanders in media to securing the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and TITAN: The Legacy of Reginald F. Lewis, a son of east Baltimore and our namesake, this exhibit helps people learn about the phenomenal life journey of Mr. Lewis, from his humble beginnings to the \$1 billion TLC Beatrice Foods deal on Wall Street. The third exhibit, Lynching in Maryland, was a collaborative project with the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project and was funded with a federal appropriation from the Maryland delegation.

The Lewis' largest expense remains our staff which total 21 FTE and 6 PT employees. This is a decrease from last year as we try to decrease salary expenses in a very unpredictable funding environment. Although FY2025 was a banner year for the museum, we believe that our anniversary programming – the TITAN exhibit, 20th anniversary gala and our Juneteenth/20th anniversary Community celebration drove most of the increase in contributions. Additionally, FY2025 attendance was up due to those events as well. In addition to private fundraising increasing, we also were fortunate to receive public dollars in FY2025 to support two large projects – the Lynching in Maryland exhibit, and the recently opened Kid Zone, which was supported by private donors and ARPA funding.

As noted in the Analysts' report, the Museum anticipates lower costs in 2026 than in 2027 when we will likely have one to two new exhibits. However, the deficit mentioned on page three of the report under the heading of "Proposed Budget Change" was driven by staff costs, fuel and utilities costs and contractual services. The cost of benefits associated with staff is approximately 50%, significantly higher than most nonprofit organizations. This higher cost is driven predominantly by the cost of participation in the state pension program. The cost of gas and electricity has continued to rise and the 21 year-old building needs to be retrofitted with energy efficient lighting. (This lighting project is underway in FY2026 thanks to a capital grant.) However, it is our intention to mitigate the deficit by decreasing staff expenses through a restructuring of the organization and through attrition. It is our hope that we do not have to cut back on any programming for the community.

Attendance in FY2025 was strong. We attribute that to our 20th anniversary programming, three new exhibits and a Juneteenth celebration that incorporated a street fair, accommodating over 3,000 visitors. We also saw a slight increase in membership growing from 611 to 654 in FY2025. We have an ambitious goal of 800 members by the end of FY2026. We saw an overall decrease in the number of volunteers. But this year, we have had strong interest from corporate volunteers. Our school visits (field trips) more than doubled in FY2025 from the previous year with 167 schools visiting. We had visits from Baltimore City, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, Prince Georges, Washington, Dorchester, Harford, Anne Arundel and Carroll Counties, and Washington DC.

As our Analyst highlighted in his report, the Museum was audited by the Office of Legislative Audits. They identified eight findings. Of those findings, progress on or completion of OLA recommendations has been made on six of the findings. It will take us a while to inventory all of the items in collections and assign a value. However, our Collections Manager is working with college interns to complete these tasks. Additionally, we are in the process of hiring new staff to lead our Special Events/Facility Rentals area. Once hired we will be able to effectively separate duties associated with the area. We have already separated responsibility for parking vouchers and reassigned access to the staff accountant. We are very pleased with the progress we have made against the identified findings.

Not unlike our museum colleagues around the country, we find ourselves operating in a very tough fiscal environment. Based on data from the Alliance of American Museums, museums suffered their most difficult year in 2025 since the pandemic. Decreased admissions and revenue were a trend. Decreased access to federal funding as well as a softening in corporate grantmaking has contributed to the challenging funding landscape. Unfortunately, we have been affected by these circumstances. Both earned income (admissions, retail and facility rentals) and contributed income are down in the first half of FY2026. For that reason we are very focused on audience development and collaboration. We are targeting three priority audiences: Gen Z and Millennials, children and seniors. We developed new programming to attract these populations. For the Gen Z and Millennial crowd we introduced Culturally Curated, a social event

that incorporates a lot of art and culture, with live art, live music and access to the exhibits after hours. For our younger audience, we had a soft opening of our Kid Zone. A space specifically curated for children. We hosted several community listening sessions to ensure that we were creating a space that the community felt met their needs. The soft opening over the King holiday saw nearly 600 children and their families visit the Kid Zone experience. And this spring we will pilot our Golden Hours program for seniors. We will allot one day each month for senior- only access. In addition to being able to visit the exhibits, we will plan programming that will address the special needs of our seniors. We are seeking partnerships with corporate funders that present a win-win for both the funder and the museum. An example is our partnership with Whiting-Turner. A strong supporter of the Museum, we worked with them to open our first satellite gallery at the Touchpoint facility in west Baltimore.

We believe The Lewis is an important asset in the Maryland arts and culture landscape and we look forward to continuing to provide exciting exhibits, educational opportunities and public programming that educates and enlightens all age ranges. We will continue to provide a space for connection, reflection, education and entertainment for all who visit.