

Date: August 27, 2026

To: Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer
Howard County Government

From: Coleen West
Executive Director
Howard County Arts Council

Testimony and Fiscal Impact Statement for:

Resolution No. ___ - 2026

Adopting – Howard County Arts and Culture Plan

Resolution No. ___-2026 is a request for the governing body to support the Howard County Arts and Culture Plan.

BACKGROUND

Howard County's General Plan, HoCo By Design (2023), established arts and culture as part of the county's economic prosperity framework. The Howard County Arts Council, the agency authorized by the governing body as the county's designated arts council, secured funding from Howard County, the Maryland State Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts in 2025 to undertake a 20-month community planning process to compliment HoCo By Design with blueprint for artistic development and growth.

The arts and culture plan was guided by rigorous research, deep community engagement, a review of cultural assets, and listening to artists, business owners, and community stakeholders and reflects the aspirations of county residents. The plan was developed through a highly collaborative process led by the Arts Council and Designing Local, a national arts and culture planning firm. A 31-member steering committee of local artists, creative practitioners, civic and educational leaders, and county officials provided guidance and oversight at every stage and shaped the plan's positioning as an expansion of

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HoCo By Design's economic prosperity framework. The plan establishes arts and culture as a cross-cutting priority touching economic development, community belonging, equity, education, and the built environment.

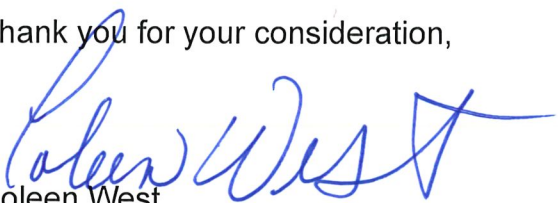
The plan also provides a framework for how arts and cultural communities can work with the governing body and other partners to address community priorities, support artists, creators, and creativity, advance arts and culture for all, and strengthen Howard County's position as a hub for innovation and creativity in the region.

The Howard County Arts and Culture Plan is designed to work alongside HoCo By Design and is meant to be a living document to use, iterate on, and adjust as elements of the plan go forward. The plan's goals and strategies will help guide arts and culture decision-making and provides actionable steps to increase awareness of cultural opportunities, diversify cultural offerings, and strengthen the county's identity as a vibrant cultural destination. Achieving these goals will be a collaborative effort with the Arts Council, local arts and cultural organizations, and other community partners.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no anticipated fiscal impact to adopting this legislation that supports the plan. However, there may be a fiscal impact associated with implementation of the plan's recommendations overtime. Any future fiscal impact would need to be approved by the governing body.

Thank you for your consideration,



Coleen West

Executive Director