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FROM

NAME & TITLE	Andrew Kleine, Chief
AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4941
SUBJECT	City Council Bill #15-0204R – Establishing a Baltimore City African American Business, Tourism, Entertainment & Heritage Preservation Commission

CITY of
BALTIMORE

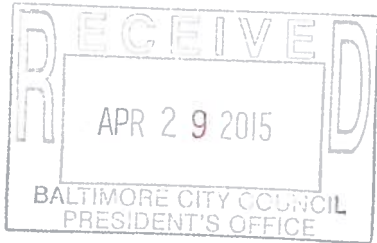
MEMO



TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
Room 400, City Hall

Attention: Ms. Natawna Austin



March 31, 2015

City Council Bill #15-0492 has been introduced for the purpose of Establishing a Baltimore City African American Business, Tourism, Entertainment & Heritage Preservation Commission. It calls on representatives from Baltimore's tourism, entertainment, business, and heritage preservation communities to meet with the Baltimore City Council in a hearing to determine how best to fashion and establish a Baltimore City African American Business, Tourism, Entertainment & Heritage Preservation Commission, and to seek a source of designated funding for the Commission.

As noted in the bill, Baltimore has a wealth of history and historic sites related to prominent African Americans and African American culture. Maintaining these sites is important to maintaining both the City's history and to positioning the City as a premier attraction for visitors of all cultures, and the City already funds a number of institutions – both public and private – devoted to preserving and promoting this history.

Both Visit Baltimore and the Baltimore National Heritage Area offer programming specifically geared toward African American history and cultural sites. As just one example of its services in this regard, Visit Baltimore offers the Legends and Legacies Heritage Pass, which provides discounted admission to three to Baltimore's premier and unique African American sites: The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture, and the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park. It also periodically offers a bus tour of these sites to complement the pass. Likewise, the Baltimore National Heritage Area also recently began offering the A Lasting Legacy: Baltimore's African American Heritage Passport provides information on heritage sites within the boundaries of the Baltimore National Heritage Area. It has also created a Pennsylvania Avenue Heritage Trail, with tour- or self-guided visits in this historic African American neighborhood. The Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts (BOPA) also hosts events focused on African American history and culture, including the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade. In Fiscal 2015, these three institutions received over \$16 million: Visit Baltimore, \$ 14,286,415; BOPA, \$ 1,984,803; Baltimore National Heritage Area, \$ 142,800.

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In addition, the City also funds a number of programs geared toward supporting African American-owned businesses, including those that participate in the tourism industry. As well as programs operated by Visit Baltimore for tourism-oriented businesses, the City's Minority and Women's Business Opportunity Office and the new Mayor's Advisory Council on Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises can also provide guidance and support to African American-owned businesses supporting this portion of our local economy.

Based on the substantial programming already offered across City agencies that is geared toward African American Business, Tourism, Entertainment & Heritage Preservation, the Department of Finance does not support the creation of an independent commission charged with this broad mission. Many of the goals of this proposed commission are already being accomplished through City-funded public and private entities. Creating a new commission with its own dedicated funding would not be efficient or cost-effective to the goals outlined in Council Bill 15-0204R.

Rather, the Department of Finance suggests that the agencies already involved in these issues should continue their efforts, perhaps in a more collaborative environment. For example, they could be encouraged to set up an interagency task force that brings together current staff members in regular meetings, so that information is more regularly and formally shared among them. The Council hearing suggested in this resolution would be an ideal time to identify current collaborative efforts and how these agencies may be able to foster a more concerted, joint effort to support this important component of the City's history and culture. The Department of Finance is available to provide representation at the proposed Council hearing.

cc: Henry Raymond
Angela Gibson