



# HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

## STATE OF MICHIGAN

### Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

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1. The sponsoring representative's first name:  
Joe
2. The sponsoring representative's last name:  
Tate
3. The cosponsoring representatives' names. All cosponsors must be listed. If none, please type 'n/a.' A signed letter from the sponsor approving the co-sponsorship and a signed letter from the member wishing to co-sponsor are required. Attach letters at question #9 below.  
N/A
4. Name of the entity that the spending item is intended for:  
Charles H Wright Museum of African American History and Detroit Historical Society
5. Physical address of the entity that the spending item is intended for:  
Charles H Wright Museum of African American History-315 E Warren Ave Detroit MI 48201  
Detroit Historical Society-5401 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48202
6. If there is not a specific recipient, the intended location of the project or activity:  
Charles H Wright Museum of African American History and Detroit Historical Society
7. Name of the representative and the district number where the legislatively directed spending item is located:  
Representative Joe Tate, 9th District
8. Purpose of the legislatively directed spending item. Please include how it provides a public benefit and why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding. Please also demonstrate that the item does not violate Article IV, S 30 of the Michigan Constitution. A \$6 million dollar allocation will ensure the basic functions of all three museums. The Charles H Wright, The Detroit Historical Museum, and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle in the city of Detroit. The funding will preserve and provide repair of essential functions of the museums for the public.

\$6 million with a 60% or \$3.6 M allocated to the Charles H Wright and 40% or \$2.4M allocated to the Detroit Historical Society

9. Attach documents here if needed:

Attachments added to the end of this file.

10. The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.

6000000

11. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding? Check all that apply.

["Federal","State","Local","Private"]

12. Please select one of the following groups that describes the entity requesting the legislatively directed spending item:

Non-profit organization

13. For a non-profit organization, has the organization been operating within Michigan for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

14. For a non-profit organization, has the entity had a physical office within Michigan for the preceding 12 months?

Yes

15. For a non-profit organization, does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

16. For a non-profit organization, list all the active members on the organization's board of directors and any other officers. If this question is not applicable, please type 'n/a.'

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17. “I certify that neither the sponsoring representative nor the sponsoring representative's staff or immediate family has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the legislatively directed spending item.”

Yes, this is correct

18. Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:

October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026

19. “I hereby certify that all information provided in this request is true and accurate.”

Yes



Representative Joe Tate  
Michigan House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Tate,

Thank you for considering the Detroit Historical Society and Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History's joint request for \$6 million in legislative-directed spending. We are pleased to provide the additional information you requested. Please see below, as well as the attached documentation which further describes the urgency of our request.

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**Names of the entities that the spending item is intended for:**

Detroit Historical Society and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

**Please see attached documentation of the purpose of the legislatively directed spending item.** A \$6M allocation will ensure basic functions at all three museums are preserved and essential maintenance and repairs will continue. No new programming or staffing would be supported.

**The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.** \$6 million, with 60% or \$3.6 M allocated to the Charles H. Wright and 40% or \$2.4M allocated to the Detroit Historical Society.

**Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:** October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026.

**Physical addresses of the entities that the spending item is intended for:**

Detroit Historical Society, 5401 Woodward Ave. Detroit MI 48202  
Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 East Warren Ave. Detroit MI 48201

**Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding?** Both organizations have received Federal, State, Local and Private Funding.

**OVER 36 MONTHS OF MICHIGAN OPERATIONS.** The Detroit Historical Society has been operating continuously in Michigan since 1921 and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History was founded in 1965.

**BOTH ENTITIES ARE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WITH BOARD OF TRUSTEES & OFFICERS.** See attached.

**START AND END DATE OF SPENDING.** October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elana Rugh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elana" being more prominent than the last name "Rugh".

Elana Rugh  
President & CEO  
Detroit Historical Society

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to be "N. Barclay". The signature is very stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a small "h" at the end.

Neil Barclay  
President & CEO  
Charles H. Wright Museum



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**BACKGROUND.** Thank you for this opportunity to provide context to our request for directed spending in FY26. Though the legislative process for our millage effort has been marked by a bevy of detours and delays, we remain committed to the effort and are redoubling our efforts to ensure that the museums we operate remain open and available to the public while our efforts to procure a millage authority proceed, notwithstanding an incredibly volatile funding environment.

### **Need for Transitional Funding in 2026**

For the last five years the Wright and Detroit Historical Society have worked closely with State, City and County elected officials to pass a History Bill which would allow the counties to levy a millage to create a sustainable source of revenue for the two institutions. Two key counties affirmed their support for the History Bill in 2024, and the Bill was subsequently passed by both the House and the Senate. While the effort continues to get the Bill signed into law, the path to a millage vote in 2026 is shorter than ever, and with sufficient transitional funding both institutions can achieve a sustainable future.

The funding landscape in 2025 is in flux. Changes in policy at the federal level are rippling through the ranks of funders from public grant sources all the way through individual donors. This uncertainty makes State transitional funding more critical than ever. Throughout these negotiations we have been assured there is strong support from the Legislature for transitional funding sufficient to avoid closure of either institution before a millage vote.

Transitional funding in 2022 and 2023 provided critical annual support which has allowed the museums to remain open, serving the region with award winning programs and exhibitions. Unfortunately, transitional funding was not granted in 2024, leading both institutions to tap limited reserves and sharpening the need for additional transitional support in 2025 and 2026.



## PURPOSE:

The Detroit Historical Society will use its share of any state directed spending allocation to **preserve the jobs, programs and planned exhibitions that were recently restored** with the benefit of transitional funding allocated in FY23 and FY24. Five curatorial positions, two Public Programs and Educational Positions and one exhibition team position are currently in jeopardy. Exhibitions, which increased to 20 per year with the benefit of transitional funding will be reduced by 50-75%, and education and public programming will be similarly affected.

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History will utilize its share of any state-directed spending allocation to **safeguard the jobs, programs, and planned exhibitions that were recently revitalized** with transitional funding allocated in FY23 and FY24. By preserving these vital resources, we continue to fulfill our mission to open minds and change lives through the exploration and celebration of African American history and culture

## PUBLIC BENEFITS:

**Tourism and Economic Impact:** As prominent cultural institutions in Detroit, the museums attract tourists and visitors, contributing to the local economy. They also enhance the region's cultural landscape, making it a more vibrant and attractive place to live and visit. Additionally:

**DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.** The Detroit Historical Society is the *only* institution that collects, protects and preserves *all* of the region's history in one place for the benefit of all. The public will directly benefit from an allocation of directed spending in two ways at both of our world class museums:

- **The history that they are living will be preserved.** We are collecting the history that is happening now so that future generations might understand and learn from these historic times. Without the curatorial staff to collect and protect this important history, it will be lost forever.
- **Their access to their own history and the history of the region will be preserved.** We are presenting the history of our region so that people can learn from our past as they seek to understand the present.

Historical Museums are one of the last remaining sources of fact trusted by the public; we have a responsibility to continue to make it available to them. The visitorship at our two museums has nearly doubled with the benefit of new exhibitions and programming made possible by an even slightly more appropriately scaled budget; this is proof that the residents of this region understand the value of history and continue to seek opportunities to engage with it.

**CHARLES H. WRIGHT MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY.** The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History is one of the nation's oldest and largest encyclopedic museums of African American history and culture. It is a unique institution dedicated to collecting, protecting, preserving and sharing African American history and culture. The public will directly benefit from an allocation of directed spending in four ways:

- **Educational Resource:** We serve as a vital educational resource, providing visitors with a deeper understanding of African American history and culture. We offer exhibits, programs, and events that educate the public about the significant contributions and experiences of African Americans.
- **Cultural Preservation:** By preserving and showcasing artifacts, documents, and stories, the museum ensures that the rich history and culture of African Americans are not forgotten. This preservation helps future generations learn from the past and appreciate the diverse cultural heritage.
- **Community Engagement:** The museum actively engages with the local community through various events, workshops, and programs. These activities foster a sense of community, promote cultural awareness, and encourage dialogue on important social issues.
- **Inspiration and Empowerment:** The museum's exhibits and programs highlight the achievements and resilience of African Americans, inspiring visitors to strive for greater understanding, acceptance, and unity. It aims to empower individuals by showcasing stories of overcoming adversity and achieving success.

## **FUNDING NEEDED:**

**The partners are seeking \$6 million in transitional funding for FY26.** At this level basic functions will be preserved, and essential maintenance and repairs will continue. No new programming or staffing would be supported.

Per internal agreement, any allocation of directed spending will be split between the partners with 60% - \$3.6M - going to support The Wright and 40% - \$2.6M - supporting The Detroit Historical Society.





## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

The residents of this region recognized a need to formally protect their culture over 100 years ago when they formed the Detroit Historical Society. Forty-three years later they redoubled this commitment when they created the largest museum devoted to African American History in the nation, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Since then, they have consistently supported the effort to preserve and display the region's history, ensuring that 300 years of their culture was not lost. The City of Detroit alone has contributed over \$110 million to the Wright and \$50 million to the DHS since their inception. Nevertheless, this level of support is not sufficient for the long-term, necessitating another source of sustainable revenue for the foreseeable future.

In 2019 the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and the Detroit Historical Society entered a formal partnership, agreeing to embark upon a joint millage campaign knowing that both institutions needed a true game-changer: a sustainable revenue source with the potential to forever change the financial trajectory of the institutions and provide an unparalleled level of programming and services to the States citizens.

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Celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2025, **The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History** is one of the nation's oldest and largest encyclopedic museums of African American history. Its mission is to open minds and change lives through the exploration and celebration of African American history and culture. This mission is connected to a larger vision to create a world in which the adversity and achievements of African American inspire everyone toward greater understanding, acceptance, and unity. With powerful exhibits and dynamic award-winning public programs, The Wright's effect ripples across local, regional, and national audiences. In addition to its permanent collections and visiting exhibitions, the museum is home to year-round programming that attracts a diverse and intergenerational audience from local youth, primary, secondary and college instructors, and scholars as well as all those interested in obtaining a deeper understanding of African American contributions to cultures around the globe.

Since its founding in 1921, the **Detroit Historical Society** has been dedicated to ensuring that the history of our region is preserved and shared so that future and current generations of metro Detroiters can better understand the people, places and events that helped shape our lives. The mission of the Detroit Historical Society is to tell Detroit's stories and why they matter. The Society advances its mission by 1) curating award-winning exhibitions that chronicle 300 years of the region's history at the **Detroit Historical Museum**, and exhibitions that explore Detroit's role in maritime history at the **Dossin Great Lakes Museum**; 2) by collecting, preserving, and sharing the City of Detroit's collection of nearly 300,000 historical artifacts; 3) by educating young people about Detroit's unique place in the past and their emerging role in its future; and 4) through community based programming and outreach that bring history into the community. The Society has made a passionate commitment to making sure that Detroit's historical museums are reflective of the community as it is today, with first-rate exhibitions and programming that tell *all* of Detroit's stories and offer critically important historical context for contemporary times.



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