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By: **Delegate Burns**

Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2005

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

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A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Apology for Slavery**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor of Maryland to apologize on behalf of the  
4 citizens of Maryland for the State's history of slavery, its long-held silence in the  
5 face of slavery, and the atrocities committed under slavery in the State;  
6 requiring the Governor to issue the apology on the 143rd anniversary of the  
7 issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln; and generally  
8 relating to an apology for slavery in Maryland.

9 **Preamble**

10 WHEREAS, There were slaves in Maryland from the time that the colony was  
11 founded, and historians recognize that the earliest slave was brought to Maryland in  
12 the 1630s; and

13 WHEREAS, A 1663 law stated that unless a black man could prove that he had  
14 contracted his labor, he was presumed to be a slave in perpetuity; and

15 WHEREAS, Slaveholding grew by significant proportions in the 1690s, so that  
16 while slaves made up only 3 percent of the population of the colony in 1658, their  
17 numbers grew to 15 to 25 percent of the populations of the various counties in 1710;  
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The growth of the tobacco trade in Maryland, and Maryland's  
20 resulting wealth, was heavily dependent on the importation and use of slaves; and

21 WHEREAS, Historians recognize that, among the American colonies, only  
22 Virginia imported more slaves than Maryland; and

23 WHEREAS, As in other states, slaves in Maryland were whipped and grossly  
24 mistreated, with large numbers of slaves forced to suffer from terrible respiratory and  
25 other ailments for which they were offered little treatment; and

26 WHEREAS, Husbands and wives were torn apart and their children were  
27 ripped from their families, as all were sold within the chains of slavery; and

1 WHEREAS, In the 1820s slaveholding continued to flourish in Maryland,  
2 despite the efforts of abolitionists who held antislavery meetings in Baltimore and  
3 Hagerstown, presented an antislavery petition to the General Assembly, and  
4 convinced one Baltimore newspaper to refuse the advertisements of slave dealers; and

5 WHEREAS, Although slaveholding in Maryland began a gradual decline after  
6 1810, with the slave population dropping from 111,500 in 1810 to 102,400 in 1830,  
7 Marylanders still owned 87,189 slaves in 1860; and

8 WHEREAS, From 1830 on, despite this drop in the overall number of slaves,  
9 Maryland remained the northernmost slaveholding state; and

10 WHEREAS, The General Assembly responded to the increasing numbers of  
11 freed blacks in the 1830s by restricting the activities of blacks and establishing a  
12 State board to oversee "the Removal of Coloured People", the repatriation of freed  
13 blacks to Africa; and

14 WHEREAS, Militant slaveholders lobbied the General Assembly in 1860 to  
15 strengthen slavery, end manumission, and forbid blacks from peddling, traveling,  
16 holding their own church services, or having their own schools; and

17 WHEREAS, Baltimoreans rioted on April 19, 1861, in opposition to the  
18 movement of Union troops, from Philadelphia to Washington, through the town; now,  
19 therefore,

20 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
21 MARYLAND, That:

22 (1) The Governor of Maryland shall apologize on behalf of the citizens of  
23 Maryland for the State's history of slavery, its long-held silence in the face of slavery,  
24 and the atrocities committed under slavery in the State; and

25 (2) The Governor shall issue the apology on September 22, 2005, the 143rd  
26 anniversary of the issuance by President Abraham Lincoln of the Emancipation  
27 Proclamation.

28 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take  
29 effect July 1, 2005.