

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Joint Resolution 6 (Senator Nathan-Pulliam)
Finance

Dedication - Henrietta Lacks Way

This joint resolution urges the governing body of Baltimore County to dedicate the portion of Dundalk Avenue in Baltimore County between the 3400 block and 3800 block, inclusive, as Henrietta Lacks Way.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Baltimore County can likely comply with the joint resolution using existing resources; however, the county advises that it is not generally county policy to allow dedication and signing, either temporary or permanent, with respect to county roads.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: With respect to State transportation facilities, the Maryland Transportation Commission (MTC) must consider and recommend any request for the dedication of transportation facilities in memory or honor of individuals or groups of significance to the State. MTC may consider and recommend approval of those requests for dedications that are made for (1) a distinguished individual who is deceased or retired from public or community service and who is widely recognized and renowned for service that has been characterized by exceptional achievement (*e.g.*, Governor Ritchie); (2) groups or associations with special relevance for Maryland (*e.g.*, Maryland Veterans); or (3) aspects of life or areas which are unique to Maryland (*e.g.*, “Chesapeake”).

When considering a dedication request, MTC must consider whether the request meets highway safety requirements and whether the dedication is for (1) a distinguished individual who is recently deceased or retired from public or community service and who is widely recognized and renowned for service that has been characterized by exceptional service or (2) an individual who sacrificed his or her well-being and life in service to our nation, State, and/or communities.

Upon receiving direction, either from the Secretary of Transportation or as the result of enacted legislation, the State Highway Administration or the Maryland Transportation Authority is required to dedicate a facility.

Background: Henrietta Lacks was an African American woman who died at age 31 on October 4, 1951, from cervical cancer. She was diagnosed at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, where her tumorous cells were harvested for research purposes without her knowledge. The cells continued to live outside of her body and reproduced rapidly. Using the first two letters of each of her names, the cells became known as HeLa cells, and they were the first immortal human cell line in history. Since their discovery, HeLa cells have been used to research cancer, HIV/AIDS, and numerous other diseases and disorders. Although the harvesting of the cells has raised legal and moral issues about patient consent, the National Institutes of Health recently entered into an agreement with the Lacks family that allows the continued use of HeLa cells for research purposes, subject to some control by the family.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Baltimore County; National Institutes of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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mm/mcr

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