

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate of Maryland
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have exercised my constitutional authority to veto *SB587 – State Government – Maryland Reparations Commission*. This legislation creates the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and make recommendations in 2027 relating to appropriate benefits to be offered to African Americans impacted by slavery and historic inequality.

I applaud the legislature's work on this bill, and I thank the Black Caucus for their leadership. Maryland is proud to be a state with the largest Black Caucus in America, our first Black Attorney General, our first Black Senator, a Black treasurer, and a Black Speaker of the House. We have moved in partnership with leaders across the state to uplift Black families and address racial disparities in our communities. That is the context in which I've made this difficult decision. Because while I appreciate the work that went into this legislation, I strongly believe now is not the time for another study. Now is the time for continued action that delivers results for the people we serve.

Over the last twenty-five years, Maryland has launched several commissions and study groups to examine the legacy of slavery in our state, from the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the State Commission to Coordinate the Study, Commemoration, and Impact of the History and Legacy of Slavery in Maryland. The scholarship on this topic is both vast in scope and robust in scale. And we are grateful for the Marylanders who have contributed their expertise to the vital project of understanding how the legacy of slavery continues to impact Black communities in our state today.

I will always protect and defend the full history of African Americans in our state and country. But in light of the many important studies that have taken place on this issue over nearly three decades, now is the time to focus on the work itself: Narrowing the racial wealth gap, expanding homeownership, uplifting entrepreneurs of color, and closing the foundational disparities that lead to inequality – from food insecurity to education. These are the issues I fought for even before I was sworn into office, and they are the priorities our administration will continue to address, with increased focus and intentionality.

Our administration's record speaks for itself. In our first year, Black-owned businesses received more than \$816 million in procurement awards—more than double the amount awarded in the previous year under our predecessors. I issued the largest state pardon in our nation's history, pardoning 175,000 Maryland convictions for cannabis possession – a step that will create more pathways to prosperity for Black Marylanders, who have been disproportionately impacted by Maryland's inequitable and outdated laws. Our administration increased funding for HBCUs by nearly 60%, investing \$1.34 billion towards Maryland's historically black colleges and universities. And by boosting the number of mortgages offered to first-time homebuyers, we've helped nearly 1,500 Black Marylanders pursue homeownership for the first time.

We've made real progress both to undo bad policies of the past and craft good policies that will lead us toward a brighter future. But we understand our work is far from over. Together, we must take urgent action to address the barriers that have walled off Black families in Maryland from work, wages, and wealth for generations. Next session, in consultation with the Maryland General Assembly, I will be introducing a package of policies I believe will help us accelerate our work in achieving these shared goals.

I look forward to partnering with the members of the House and Senate, the bill sponsors, and the Legislative Black Caucus as we build a more equal and just Maryland – one that accepts and uplifts our whole history, helps every Marylander realize their full potential, and leaves no one behind.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore
Governor