

March 10, 2020

Dear Del. Wanika Fisher,

I would like to submit the following written testimony in support of Maryland House Bill 1201 Maryland Reparations Commission - Establishment (Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act). As a person whose ancestors enslaved people, I fully support this bill and the establishment of this Commission.

Reparations are long overdue. According to Dr. Raymond Winbush, a professor at Morgan State University, African Americans have been fighting for reparations for over 550 years. More and more white people like me are in support of reparations. I believe reparations are needed because of the devastating and traumatic harm of enslavement and its many legacies with which people are still dealing today and the systemic racism, the racial inequities, and the injustices that still exist in all of our systems (education, health, housing, employment, legal, etc.). I believe that this Commission would go a long way toward addressing this harm, dismantling systemic racism, and creating racial equity and justice. I have been working for all of this since 2014 along with organizations such as Coming to the Table, which was founded by descendants of enslavers and people who were enslaved. I will continue working for all of this as long as I live. As Dr. Martin Luther King said injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

I would ask that the Commission be lenient when deciding whether or not to approve the applications for funding. One of the legacies of enslavement is the difficulty African American people have in tracing their ancestry. You have probably heard of the 1870 brick wall, past which many African American people cannot go because their ancestors were listed as numbers and by their first names only in documents before 1870.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Bill 1201.

Sincerely,

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