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March 12, 2021

BILL: HB 297, Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Reporting and Sunset Extension

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support

The Maryland State Archives is an active member of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission and is submitting this letter of support on its behalf. HB 297 extends the term of the Commission by two years to complete the tasks outlined through legislation. The Commission is to hold hearings and conduct research to advance our knowledge about African American Marylanders who were the victims of mob violence in our State.

The Commission has identified over forty incidents of victims who were accused of a crime but were not afforded due process as a result of the violent actions of an extralegal mob and were lynched in Maryland. The COVID-19 pandemic effectively thwarted activities that are specifically mandated by the authorizing legislation. There is much work to be done in regards to research and outreach to communities who were impacted.

The Commission in its first year focused on developing policies, forming committees, and building relationships with key stakeholders. During that time the Commission has selected a Chair and Vice Chair to drive the work, drafted and submitted an interim report, and is now at the point of starting to conduct research and arranging public hearings. This huge undertaking will require additional time and dedicated resources. An extension for this work will allow time for the Commission to write and submit a thoughtful and informed final report. The Maryland State Archives fully supports House Bill 297 and urges a favorable report.

If you have further questions, please contact Liz Coelho, 410-260-640, or liz.coelho@maryland.gov.