



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal
Public Policy
Network

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 179
FAVORABLE**

**Indigenous Peoples' Day - Rule of Interpretation and Replacement of
Columbus Day**

TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Co-Chair, and members of the House and Government Operations Committee;

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Public Policy Network, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: March 14, 2024:

The Episcopal Church and our Maryland Diocese support the establishment of Indigenous Peoples' Day to replace Columbus Day. Columbus Day was created by President Harrison in 1892 in response to the anti-Italian motivated lynching of 11 Italian Americans in New Orleans in 1891. Columbus Day is based on the erroneous idea that he "discovered" America.

At General Convention 2009, the Episcopal Church approved Resolution D035, which called for the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. That Resolution stated: "The General Convention repudiates and renounces the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God."

It explained, "This doctrine, which originated with Henry VII in 1496, held that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers could assert dominion and title over non-Christian lands with the full blessing and sanction of the Church. It continues to be invoked, in only slightly modified form, in court cases and in the many destructive policies of governments and other institutions of the modern nation-state that lead to the colonizing dispossession of the lands of indigenous peoples and the disruption of their way of life."

The presiding Bishop stated in 2009 that: “I urge you to learn more about the Doctrine of Discovery and the search for healing in our native communities... But this is also a matter for healing in communities and persons of European immigrant descent. Colonists, settlers, and homesteaders benefited enormously from the availability of “free” land, and their descendants continue to benefit to this day. That land was taken by force or subterfuge from peoples who had dwelt on it from time immemorial – it was their “promised land.” The nations from which the settlers came, and the new nations which resulted in the Americas, sought to impose another culture and way of life on the peoples they encountered. Attempting to remake the land and peoples they found “in their own image” was a profound act of idolatry.

Repentance and amendment of life are the answer, and God asks us all – this Church, our partners and neighbors, and the nations which were founded under the Doctrine of Discovery – to the challenging work of reconciliation.”

We respectfully request a favorable report of HB 179.

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