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January 13, 2023

TO: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health & Government Operations Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: HB 566 – State and Local Government – Real Property – Confederate
Naming Prohibited (Support)

The Office of the Attorney General strongly supports passage of House Bill 566 (“HB 566”), Delegate Grossman’s legislation to prohibit any political subdivision from naming real property (e.g. streets, buildings, parks, or subdivisions) after any person who voluntarily served in the Confederate States of America. If enacted, proposed section 9-102 of the State and Local Government Article would provide that “[a] State entity or political subdivision of the State may not assign a Confederate name to real property owned by the State or political subdivision.”

Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, himself an Army veteran, has “long maintained that traitorous men who fought to preserve the institution of slavery and defend white supremacy do not deserve to be honored by our military, and it is long past time their names were removed from places of reverence,” such as military forts and institutions.¹ Similarly, here, Maryland State or political subdivisions should be precluded from lionizing Confederate soldiers and sympathizers by naming public properties after them.

¹ Samuel Benson, Here are the possible new names for 9 Army bases that honored Confederates, POLITICO (Mar. 17, 2022), available online at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/03/17/confederate-army-bases-new-names-00018187> (last visited on Feb. 9, 2024).

In 2022, then-Congressman Brown noted, “I learned to fly helicopters at Ft. Rucker. I deployed to Iraq from Ft. Bragg, and I earned my jump wings at Ft. Benning. All these bases honored men who wouldn’t want me or other Black Americans serving in uniform, let alone in Congress.”² Similarly, Marylanders shouldn’t have to go about their daily business on streets or in buildings, parks, or subdivisions named after Confederate soldiers.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of Attorney General urges the Health & Government Operations Committee to favorable report HB 566.

cc: The Honorable Brooke Grossman (Sponsor)

² Equal Justice Initiative, Commission Recommends Changes for Army Bases Named for Confederate Leaders, EJI (Jun. 8, 2022), available online at <https://eji.org/news/commission-recommends-changes-for-army-bases-named-for-confederate-leaders/> (last visited Feb. 9, 2024).