



Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

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Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Maryland House of Delegates
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Bonnie Cullison
Maryland House of Delegates
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I write to urge your support for the Indigenous Peoples' Day - Rule of Interpretation and Replacement of Columbus Day (HB 0179) sponsored by Delegate Jazz Lewis and to move this bill favorably from committee. Over the past several years, there has been a welcomed shift away from celebrating Christopher Columbus, a discoverer of the Americas, to instead celebrating the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This shift comes as public sentiment and knowledge of Columbus has changed. Columbus was not the only European explorer of the Americas, and he did not step foot onto the land now known as the United States of America.

Maryland has the opportunity to further cement the state's support of our American Indian tribes by formally recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day. Indigenous peoples are believed to have inhabited the area at least since c. 10,000 BC, and numerous Tribes continue to thrive in our state today. According to the Chesapeake Bay Program, the State of Maryland has formally recognized three tribes (the Piscataway Indian Nation, Piscataway Conoy Tribe and the Accohannock Indian Tribe). The Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs serves the following Indigenous tribes in the state: Accohannock Indian Tribe, Assateague Peoples Tribe, Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Piscataway Conoy Confederacy and Sub-Tribes, Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, Piscataway Indian Nation, Pocomoke Indian Nation and Youghiogheny River Band of Shawnee Indian.

By recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day, Maryland will serve as a leading example in the United States as a state that respects and honors its Indigenous tribes through its words and actions. Chesapeake Conservancy stands ready to support and recognize HB 0179 for the benefit of our Indigenous inhabitants and all Marylanders.

Thank you for considering my testimony, I urge your support for HB 0179.

Joel Dunn
President & CEO