



2601 N HOWARD ST
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
TEL 410) 625-LGBT (5428)
FAX 410) 625-7423
www.freestate-justice.org

Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thursday, February 20, 2025

HB1422 – State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Esteemed Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **HB1422**, which seeks to establish the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and recommend appropriate benefits for individuals whose ancestors were enslaved in the State or were impacted by inequitable government policies.

HB1422 addresses the enduring legacy of slavery and systemic discrimination that has resulted in significant disparities for Black Marylanders. These disparities manifest in various sectors, including housing, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. By establishing the Maryland Reparations Commission, this bill aims to identify and recommend measures to rectify these historical injustices and promote equity within our state.

The establishment of the Maryland Reparations Commission is a critical step toward acknowledging and addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of slavery and discriminatory policies. The Commission is tasked with:

1. **Studying Reparations Models:** Examining reparations initiatives implemented by other governments and institutions to identify effective strategies. This includes analyzing various forms of reparations, such as monetary compensation, property tax rebates, social service assistance, and educational opportunities.
2. **Assessing Historical Inequities:** Investigating the history of slavery in Maryland and the subsequent inequitable policies that have contributed to current economic and social disparities among Black communities.

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FreeState Justice, Inc. is a social justice organization that works through direct legal services, legislative and policy advocacy, and community engagement to enable Marylanders across the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities to be free to live authentically, with safety and dignity, in all communities throughout our state.

3. **Developing Recommendations:** Formulating actionable recommendations for reparations, including eligibility criteria, application processes, and potential funding sources. This comprehensive approach ensures that the proposed measures are well-informed and tailored to the specific needs of those affected.

The inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the Commission, such as members from historically Black colleges and universities, civil rights organizations, and economic experts, ensures a holistic and informed perspective in the development of reparative measures.

As an advocate for marginalized communities, I have witnessed firsthand the compounded effects of systemic discrimination on Black LGBTQIA+ individuals. The intersectionality of race, sexual orientation, and gender identity often exacerbates the challenges faced, leading to heightened vulnerabilities. **HB1422** represents a meaningful opportunity to address these compounded inequities and work toward a more just and inclusive Maryland.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB1422**. This legislation is a pivotal step in confronting and remedying the historical injustices that have long plagued our state. By supporting this bill, we affirm our commitment to equity, justice, and the dignity of all Marylanders.

Best,

Ronnie L. Taylor

Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [*Black Americans' views of reparations for slavery / Pew Research Center*](#)
2. [*Why we need reparations for Black Americans*](#)
3. [*Reparations / NAACP*](#)