

# **Delegate Mireku-North Testimony in Support of Hous**

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Position: FAV

**BERNICE MIREKU-NORTH, ESQ.**  
*Legislative District 14*  
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Ways and Means Committee

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Early Childhood

Local Revenues



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 404: Natural Resources - State Parks – Terminology**

**February 11th, 2026**


Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and esteemed members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I come before you to offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 404: Natural Resources - State Parks - Terminology**. This bill simply changes the names of Freedman’s State Historical Park and Port of Deposit State Historical Park to Freedman’s State Park and Port Deposit State Park, respectively.

For context, the Great Maryland Outdoors Act of 2022 established two new units of the Maryland State Park system by name. The first, Freedman’s State Historical Park in northeastern Montgomery County, will be carved from portions of Patuxent River State Park. It encompasses structures and lands associated with Enoch George Howard, a formerly enslaved man who became a prominent leader in Montgomery County’s Black community, and his family. The second, Port of Deposit State Historical Park, will encompass the site of the former Tome School in Cecil County, as well as the northern portion of a freedman’s community known as Snow Hill.

When the Great Maryland Outdoors Act of 2022 was originally passed, it was not clear to legislators at the time that there is no existing state designation for a “historical park”. Maryland State Parks are designed to be multi-purpose sites, with opportunities not just for historical interpretation but for recreation, landscape preservation, environmental education, and more. The Park Service is concerned that giving parks such as Freedman’s and Port of Deposit the name “historical park” could limit public interest in the sites.

Furthermore, **House Bill 404** would remove the word “of” from “Port of Deposit” to make the name of the park more geographically accurate by using the current name, rather than one of the historical names of the adjacent municipality.

With that in mind, I humbly request a favorable report on **House Bill 404** to more accurately represent these new State Parks when they open to the public.

  
The Honorable Bernice Mireku-North, Esq.  
Delegate. Maryland Legislative District 14  
Maryland House of Delegates

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Position: FAV



*Wes Moore, Governor*  
*Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor*  
*Josh Kurtz, Secretary*  
*David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary*

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February 11, 2026

BILL NUMBER: **HOUSE BILL 404**

SHORT TITLE: **NATURAL RESOURCES - STATE PARK TERMINOLOGY**

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: **SUPPORT**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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This bill amends terminology related to State parks to ensure consistency across our park system. It aims to align state park nomenclature with existing terminology for state park land-use designations. No operational or fiscal impacts are anticipated.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Prior legislation has codified the names of certain state parks, including Freedman's State Historical Park and Port of Deposit State Historical Park. Despite what the name may indicate, there is no specific designation for a "State Historical Park." In fact, most public lands have historical significance in addition to these other valuable resources.

Eliminating this inconsistency regarding the titling of Maryland State Parks will help the Department avoid confusion and ensure uniformity across the system.

### **BILL EXPLANATION**

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This bill repeals and amends Article – Natural Resources Section 5–2A–04(f)(3), 5–2A–05(b)(2), and 5–1012 for the purpose of altering certain terminology relating to State parks that preserve and interpret the history of certain populations; and generally relating to State parks.

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