



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

Support  
SB 20 General Provisions - Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day  
Education, Health and Environmental Matters  
2/27/2020  
Testimony presented by Al Collins

Good afternoon my name is Al Collins and today I am representing the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland as well as the Maryland Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians. We are in support of SB 20.

The purpose of SB 20 is to require the Governor annually to proclaim the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day. This is important for several reasons. The first was that the Tuskegee Airmen fought a war on two fronts—one against the Axis powers and one against racial discrimination. By proving black men could fly and serve courageously in combat, the Tuskegee Airmen set the stage for the integration of the US military in 1948 and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The second was the Tuskegee Airmen proved they were as good as any other group of pilots during World War II. They flew more than 1,800 missions. This included 351 missions to protect white bombers in the sky. They shot down 112 enemy airplanes. The Tuskegee Airman reflect the struggles of African Americans to achieve equal rights not only through legal attacks on the system of segregation but also through non-violence aimed at segregation in the military.

Within the Episcopal Church we are called to recite the Baptismal Covenant that expresses how we will live faithfully inside and outside the church walls. One of the questions asked is “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” SB 20 is an opportunity to provide dignity and respect for these important and courageous men.

We respectfully request a favorable report for SB 20.