

In Support of establishing “The Land Mary-Land”

as the official state song for children.

HB 0180

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass,
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Dr. Michael S. Glaser

Date: March 9, 2020

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

I am a retired professor at St. Mary’s College of Maryland who worked with young children all across the state as a Maryland State Arts Council Poet-In- The-Schools for over 25 years. In 2004, I was appointed by Governor Robert Erlich to be the Poet Laureate of Maryland – a position in which I proudly served from 2004 until 2009. Being the State Poet, increased the opportunity I had to work with many of the bright children in our state. One of the main things I have learned about children is how important it is for them to have a voice – to be able to speak about those things they care about deeply. That is, I think, what they do when they write their own poems and stories, and that is also what the children at Chesapeake Public Charter School have done with their proposal that the song, “The Land Mary-Land” become the official State Song for Children.

As you know, the song was written by a native of this area, a scientist and environmentalist who is often called the Bard of the Chesapeake. Following his service in Korea, Tom Wisner dedicated his entire adult life to teaching about, valuing and protecting the Chesapeake. He worked widely and tirelessly with organizations and schools throughout our state in his efforts to instill in his fellow Marylanders -- and especially in school children --a love and respect for the land and the waters.

“The Land Mary-Land” It is a song that speaks of the vision of our founders, and it is a song that is especially appropriate for a State Song for children because it focuses on the idealism of the settlers, the importance of their dreams, their dedication to freedom and their hunger for acceptance and tolerance.

Establishing “The Land, Mary-land” as the Maryland State Song for Children will serve not only to recognize and honor the courage of those pioneers who risked their lives to establish Maryland as a place of tolerance and opportunity, it will also serve to help our school children feel personally connected to the stories of those early settlers who came across on the Ark and the Dove. The lyrics speak powerfully of the longing for freedom that led to the founding of our state.

The children of Maryland – our children—deserve a song that speaks to the dreams of “a place to believe in the truth that we feel.” Indeed, I would respectfully suggest that adopting such a state song for our children is part of our adult and legislative responsibility to help develop citizens of the future who embrace the visions and longings that are referred to in this song.

Additionally, adopting the Land Mary-Land as the official Maryland State Song for Children is a way of encouraging our students to become more engaged in and aware of their own responsibility for the future of this state – its historic dreams and its now fragile environment – the entire Chesapeake Basin. It is a way of encouraging our youth to grow into their own responsible stewardship of this state – its land, its waters, its natural resources and its people.

If, indeed, we can help do all this by establishing “The Land Maryland” as the State Song for Children – a song that our students can learn and sing with honor and pride, -- is it not incumbent upon us as responsible adults entrusted with the well-being of our children and our state to do so?

From years of working with children, Tom Wisner learned that songs help shape our values, and help make us who we are. Is it not, especially at this time in our history, important to nurture the “journey for humanity” that this song speaks of – to remember and affirm – especially for our children—the founding ideals and visions that are our inheritance?

Ultimately, having a Maryland State Song for Children that our students can proudly sing at school and other official state events will serve to strengthen the special pride we all have in our state: its beauties, its stories, its resources and its diverse people.

Today's young children are our future. If we simply tell them they are remarkable and do not find a way to honor their request, do we not suggest to them that government doesn't take them seriously? Might we, instead, use this opportunity as a chance to model for our youngsters the kind of listening and respect that can serve to help shape a brighter and more inclusive future for our state?

I thank you for your attention and once again, urge your passage of HB 0180 to make "the Land, Mary-Land" our official Maryland State Song for children.

Sincerely yours,

Michael S. Glaser

THE SONG “THE LAND, MARY–LAND”

BY TOM WISNER

Proposed as

THE STATE SONG FOR CHILDREN.

CHORUS:

**OH, THE LAND, MARYLAND WILL SURELY REVEAL
A PLACE TO BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH THAT WE FEEL.
ON THE WINGS OF THE MORNING IN THE CUP OF HIS HAND,
WE WILL CARRY OUR LONGING TO THE FAIR MARYLAND.**

I

**AMID ROPE TAR AND CANVAS AND TORN FROM OUR PAST,
IN A DUNGEON OF TIMBER, WE PRAY WE MAY LAST
THROUGH SICKNESS AND TURMOIL IN SEARCH OF OUR HOME,
WE WILL TRUST OUR CONVICTION TO THE ROLLING WHITE FOAM.**

II

**SHE IS RIGGED OUT AND HANDSOME A MAID OF THE SEA,
BOUND ON A JOURNEY FOR HUMANITY.**

**SHE'LL SAIL THROUGH THE MORNING TO THE GREAT OCEAN WIDE,
BEARING THE LONGING THAT IS CARRIED INSIDE.**

III

**LONG BEFORE I WAS MADE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH,
YOU KNEW OF MY LONGING AND YOU FASHIONED MY BIRTH,
WITH A PASSION TO JOURNEY OUT OVER THE SEA
IN SEARCH OF THE VISION OF THE RIGHT TO LIVE FREE.**