



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1201

State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission - Establishment (Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act)

Cathryn Paul, On Behalf of CASA de Maryland, Inc.
Health and Government Operations Committee

March 10, 2020

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

CASA de Maryland ("CASA") is pleased to provide enthusiastic support for House Bill 1201. This critical bill would establish a reparations commission that would develop and implement a process for providing reparations to descendants of individuals who were enslaved in the state of Maryland.

CASA is the largest membership-based immigrant advocacy and services organization in the region, with approximately 100,000 members across the state, serving black and brown immigrants in Maryland. While much of CASA's membership would not qualify for reparations under the recommendations of the commission that would be instituted in this legislation, because they are not descendants of slaves in Maryland, many of our members are descendants of slaves from across the Americas, Caribbean and other countries, and deeply feel the economic and traumatic generational affects of slavery.

As the national conversation around reparations has finally started to emerge out of activist spaces and into the mainstream dialogue, CASA remains in full support of seeking reparations that would not absolve, but contribute to remedying Maryland's shameful history of instituting and maintaining slavery.

In 2007, the Maryland General Assembly acknowledged and apologized for its participation in slavery in the state and post-slavery injustices that followed. Our government has a moral responsibility to not just apologize, but also must make amends to fellow citizens who are still deeply harmed by past racist policies of our government. While the new statues of leaders Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass that unveiled earlier this session, were a symbolic gesture, our state has yet to take real policy action in efforts to address slavery and the 150-plus years of racial discrimination as a result.

CASA is open and supportive of a variety of different means towards achieving reparations including tuition reimbursement, loan assistance, or a cash sum - and believe that a commission with a purpose to identify the appropriate remedies for Maryland is not only necessary, but long overdue.

We **strongly urge the committee to act favorably in support of HB1201**. This act will be one of the most important and necessary steps toward racial equity that we can take in our state.

Cathryn Paul
Research and Policy Analyst, CASA
cpaul@wearecasa.org