

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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February 24, 2020

House Joint Resolution 12 – Commission to Rename Negro Mountain **Position: Support**

Dear Chairperson Healey, Vice Chairperson Holmes, and Members of the House Rules & Executive Nominations Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, and physical and mental disability.

Negro Mountain in Garrett County, Maryland, is allegedly named by Western Maryland residents in the 1700’s who wanted to honor the sacrifice of an African American gentleman named Nemesis (or by some accounts, Goliath) who died defending a band of soldiers or hunters during a skirmish on the mountain during colonial times. However, over time the term “Negro” grew to be an unacceptable term in American English, and later became considered derogatory following the Civil Rights Movement. The mountain’s name is now controlled by the U.S. Board of Geographic Names. The Board has stated publicly that they have received requests to change the name back to at least 1994, but have rejected such applications because of opposition from various government units in Maryland and Pennsylvania – including county governments and the Maryland State Archives.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights believes that now is the time to change the name of this mountain to something that does not include derogatory and racist terminology, and rather reflects local history and culture in an honorable, socially acceptable way.

Because of this, MCCR urges the committee to vote favorably on HJ12. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.