



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Testimony on: HB0437 - General Provisions – State Song – Repeal and Advisory Council

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 24, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Kirill Reznik

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, uplift all members of our communities, and promote equity. DTMG strongly supports HB0437 because it will repeal Maryland’s Confederate state song “Maryland! My Maryland!”, removing a symbol of hate from the Maryland experience and ensure an appropriate replacement is selected.

The deaths of George Floyd, Anton Black, and many others call attention to the structural and institutional racism before us and the need to continue fighting for a more equitable and just society. The Maryland state song is a Confederate embarrassment, from the first line, which refers to President Lincoln as a “despot,” through the fifth stanza, which urges Marylanders to “burst the tyrant’s chain” – the chain being not slavery, but Lincoln’s call for abolition. Maryland! My Maryland! was written to protest Union Troops in Baltimore and Southern Confederate soldiers used it as a Civil War battle hymn. Maryland did not adopt Maryland! My Maryland! as our State song until 1939 – a time when Maryland was sadly among our nation’s segregated “Jim Crow” states.

Words matter. In classrooms and on school sports fields, we have been teaching our children to sing a song that glorifies Maryland’s shameful slave-holding history. If we are ever to reckon with our racist past and successfully build a future that embraces and protects all, we must move beyond these symbols that foster hate, exclusion, and injustice. Following the violence of Charlottesville, the January 6th insurrection that threatened our Democracy, and the calls for justice by the Black Lives Matter movement, the current social climate makes this the best time for Maryland to topple our musical monument to the Confederacy and send a strong message that all are welcome in today’s Maryland.

While efforts for police reform and prison reform remain at the top of DoTheMostGood's social justice agenda, symbolism and representation can lead to larger conversations and provide a needed avenue toward systemic change. Passage of HB0437 is one of many important steps the Maryland General Assembly can take this session to right the wrongs of the past.

The proposal to have the State Song Advisory Panel, consisting of members of the General Assembly, the State Archivist, the Maryland Historical Society, and five Maryland residents review public submissions for a new State song and make recommendations to the General Assembly will ensure that an appropriate replacement is selected for the Maryland state song.

DoTheMostGood is eager to work with Delegate Reznik to ensure the passage of this important bill that can position Maryland as a leader of social justice. **Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB0437.**

Respectfully submitted,

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