

Testimony of Ruby Nwaebube

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Before the
Ways and Means Committee
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Pertaining To: HB11, Public Schools - African American History - Development
of Content Standards and Implementation
Support

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of history and preservation in Maryland.

Preservation Maryland is the statewide voice for historic preservation that works to protect the best of Maryland. Since 1931, Preservation Maryland have worked tirelessly to protect the places, stories, and communities in Maryland that matter.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 11

Preservation Maryland emphatically supports HB11. This bill requires the State Board of Education to develop African American History content, from the pre-colonial Africa to the current social justice issues, for implementation in the State's Social Studies Curriculum for the 2022-2023 school year. This bill supports the initiation, expansion, and reconciliation of the African American history narrative in every public school in Maryland.

Maryland has one of the oldest and richest histories of any state in the nation. Accordingly, it is important to develop and teach a more robust and accurate historical narrative in the state. From a historic preservation perspective, developing and teaching comprehensive, accurate African American history is right for Maryland's students, and indeed for all Americans. We should not allow our education system to continue to teach a one-sided at best, or a whitewashed

and revisionist at worst, narrative. Nor can we continue the notion that African American history only consists of two eras: Slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. African Americans have been the cofounders of Maryland and the United States, yet their contributions have been neglected and minimized. HB11 would go a long way to giving Maryland's students a comprehensive look at African American history, while not ignoring the facts or rewriting the dark history rooted in our country. Not recognizing the full contributions of African Americans is denying their integral part in shaping the current state of Maryland, and one way to rectify this is by ensuring that young Marylanders learn this history.

Today, we are living in two Americas. We have one America that we witnessed this month who rioted and desecrated the Capitol, believing that white supremacy reigns over democracy. Then there is the other America, where minorities and allies are protesting for their treatment and rights. America is a divided nation, but learning from our history, the good and the bad, the privileged and the marginalized, is one step to addressing this divide.

When we talk about the relationship between African Americans and the United States, it is often an uncomfortable conversation. This conversation is covered with a band-aid, because as a nation, we do not want to remember or fully address the problems. HB11 will not only develop a more inclusive content in the social studies curriculum but will rip off the band-aid placed on our dark history. With the passage of this legislation, the Maryland Department of Education will have an opportunity to teach its students an accurate and complete history and to start the healing process in our state.

Therefore, I respectfully support and urge a favorable passage of HB11.

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