

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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January 27, 2021

House Bill 11 – Public Schools - African American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Kaiser, Vice Chairperson Washington, and Members of the House Ways & Means 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, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 11 mandates that the State Board of Education adopt uniform content standards for all Maryland public schools for African American history. The topics identified for inclusion are the history of African people before political conflicts that led to slavery; the contributions of African Americans to society; slavery and abolition; Jim Crow laws; the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre; social injustice and police brutality; and additional topics determined to be relevant by the State Board of Education. Counties are charged with developing and implementing age-appropriate curriculum guides for teaching beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB11 because it is important for every student in Maryland to receive a holistic education that provides a comprehensive analysis of the past and present situation of African-descended people in the United States. The particular topics identified in this bill have a profound nexus to many of the challenges we are currently facing. It is MCCR’s belief that teaching these particularly significant events in African American history will not only assist students with better understanding today’s challenges, but will also better equip them to address these challenges in their communities.

For these reasons, MCCR strongly encourages a favorable vote on HB11. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.