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THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 1433 - State Highways – Designations – Piscataway Highway

SPONSOR: Delegates Walker, T. Branch, Turner, and Valderrama

HEARING DATE: March 31, 2022

COMMITTEE: Finance

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 1433 - State Highways – Designations – Piscataway Highway**, that will designate Maryland Route 210 as the Piscataway Highway.

Maryland Route 210, called Indian Head Highway, was termed during a time of insensitivity towards the Native American tribes that lived and continue to be apart of our communities, here in Maryland. As we rethink and reimagine what inclusion looks like across, not only the State, but the Country, correcting the errors of the past is a necessary step in building stronger relationships and ensuring that our naming conventions are respectful of all of our diverse groups in our State.

We understand that members of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe are supportive of renaming Indian Head Highway to Piscataway Highway, and we believe the retitling of this road on lands that were historically used by the Piscataway and surrounding tribes serves as a way to pay tribute and respect to those tribes native to our communities, instead of its current derogatory nomenclature.

This has been a fight by many Native American groups for years to rename this highway, and this is a legislative solution that follows many other bills to rename state roads in Maryland, similar to the renaming of the Nice Bridge in Southern Maryland to the Nice-Middleton Bridge. This change is one that respects and honors these native tribes and is a meaningful step to ensure we are correcting the mistakes of the past.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 1433** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

Piscataway Letter of Opposition.pdf

Uploaded by: Francis Gray

Position: UNF



Piscataway Conoy Tribe

Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council

P.O. Box 638

Bryans Road, Maryland 20616

piscatawayconoycouncil@gmail.com

March 30, 2022

Distinguished Lawmakers,

I am writing this letter in regards to House Bill (HB 1433) which proposes to rename Indian Head Highway to Piscataway Highway and is supported by several tribal members. As the Chairman of the Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council, the elected governing body of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe (PCT), one of three (3) Maryland State-recognized tribes, I would like to state that while it would be an honor to have recognition of our tribe's longstanding presence in the State of Maryland, the renaming of this highway has mixed support amongst our membership and Piscataway tribal community. While a portion of our members are offended by the term "Indian Head", which has become a popular cause in today's society, others are concerned that the name change will erase references to "Indian Headlands" a term which was used in historical records to identify the Southern Maryland region where our people resided. Additionally, some in our tribal community have voiced that they would rather not have the Piscataway name associated with Highway Route 210, which has seen a number of deaths in the past few years and has been named, arguably, one of the deadliest highways in the State of Maryland. These are all valid points of view that should be considered. Since there is no prevailing consensus in these varying opinions within our tribal community, it is very concerning that this bill was not fully vetted and that no outreach to Piscataway tribal leadership was attempted prior to HB 1433 being introduced.

In addition to this bill not being supported by the vast majority of Piscataway tribal citizens, it has been brought to the PCT Tribal Council's attention that a 2-year old online petition, "Change the name of Indian Head Highway and the Town of Indian Head" (Change.org) which in fact, was not started by the recognized Piscataway Conoy Tribe and cites a Piscataway tribal member and "15 others", which includes several high-level Maryland officials (i.e. Larry Hogan, Governor of Maryland, Brandon Paulin, Mayor of Indian Head, Senator Arthur Ellis, Charles County Commissioners, various delegates and a deceased lawmaker) who may/may not be aware that they have been included on this petition and may potentially be assumed as supporters of it. This Change.org petition has been touted very heavily by the media as a reference for "overwhelming" support of HB 1433. Amongst the more than 4,000+ signers, it is noted that only a small fraction of those listed are actually Piscataway tribal members or Maryland residents. This fact is very troubling and should be of grave concern to lawmakers who will make a

decision for Marylanders, potentially based on a concerted effort to misrepresent large support for a bill that includes those who do not have a vested interest in its passage.

In closing, I would like to reiterate how recognition of the first people of Maryland and their historical homeland is a very honorable and prestigious acknowledgement. However, there are many voices that should be heard in the process, not just the loudest ones, and much careful deliberation needs to be done to ensure that this honor is bestowed appropriately. Unfortunately, the introduction of HB 1433 falls short of addressing the above concerns and therefore, we cannot support its passage at this time. As the duly elected representative body for the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, the PCT Tribal Council to-date has not been consulted at any time about this bill; however, this body has had, for several years, an ongoing government-to-government relationship with the State of Maryland and various other government entities, working on many Piscataway tribal-related matters with much success. We hope that this collaboration continues for years to come.

Sincerely,

Francis Gray
Tribal Chair
Piscataway Conoy Tribe

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Uploaded by: Lucille Walker

Position: UNF

— DESTINATION —
Southern Maryland

March 31, 2022

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Lucille W. Walker, Executive Director, Southern Maryland Heritage Area
(Destination Southern Maryland)

RE: UNFAVORABLE Report for HB 1433 State Highways – Designation – Piscataway Highway

It is with concern that we put in this written testimony regarding HB 1433. You will also have written testimony from Mr. Francis Gray, Chairman, Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council, urging an unfavorable report. We support his testimony, which includes the following:

"I am writing this letter in regards to House Bill (HB 1433) which proposes to rename Indian Head Highway to Piscataway Highway and is supported by several tribal members. As the Chairman of the Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council, the elected governing body of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe (PCT), one of three (3) Maryland State-recognized tribes, I would like to state that while it would be an honor to have recognition of our tribe's longstanding presence in the State of Maryland, the renaming of this highway has mixed support amongst our membership and Piscataway tribal community. While a portion of our members are offended by the term "Indian Head", which has become a popular cause in today's society, others are concerned that the name change will erase references to "Indian Headlands" a term which was used in historical records to identify the Southern Maryland region where our people resided. Additionally, some in our tribal community have voiced that they would rather not have the Piscataway name associated with Highway Route 210, which has seen a number of deaths in the past few years and has been named, arguably, one of the deadliest highways in the State of Maryland. These are all valid points of view that should be considered. Since there is no prevailing consensus in these varying opinions within our tribal community, it is very concerning that this bill was not fully vetted and that no outreach to Piscataway tribal leadership was attempted prior to HB 1433 being introduced.

In addition to this bill not being supported by the vast majority of Piscataway tribal citizens, it has been brought to the PCT Tribal Council's attention that a 2-year old online petition, "Change the name of Indian Head Highway and the Town of Indian Head" (Change.org) which in fact, was not started by the recognized Piscataway Conoy Tribe and cites a Piscataway tribal member and "15 others", which includes several high-level Marylandwho may/may not be aware that they have been included on this petition and may potentially be assumed as supporters of it. This Change.org petition has been touted very heavily by the media as a reference for "overwhelming" support of HB 1433. Amongst the more than 4,000+ signers, it is noted that only a small fraction of those listed are actually Piscataway tribal members or Maryland residents. This fact is very troubling and should be of grave concern to lawmakers who will make a decision for Marylanders, potentially based on a concerted effort to misrepresent large support for a bill that includes those who do not have a vested interest in its passage.

Destination Southern Maryland

SOUTHERN MARYLAND HERITAGE AREA CONSORTIUM P. O. BOX 745 HUGHESVILLE, MD 20637
DESTINATIONSMARYLAND.COM 301.343.2771

— DESTINATION —
Southern Maryland

In closing, I would like to reiterate how recognition of the first people of Maryland and their historical homeland is a very honorable and prestigious acknowledgement. However, there are many voices that should be heard in the process, not just the loudest ones, and much careful deliberation needs to be done to ensure that this honor is bestowed appropriately. Unfortunately, the introduction of HB 1433 falls short of addressing the above concerns and therefore, we cannot support its passage at this time. As the duly elected representative body for the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, the PCT Tribal Council to-date has not been consulted at any time about this bill; however, this body has had, for several years, an ongoing government-to-government relationship with the State of Maryland and various other government entities, working on many Piscataway tribal-related matters with much success. We hope that this collaboration continues for years to come.” (From written testimony by Mr. Francis Gray)

We here at the Southern Maryland Heritage Area are a regional identity, and greatly honor the history and traditions of the First People of this region, the Piscataway. While this legislation was certainly meant as a positive action, a recognition, the concerns of the Tribal Chairman Gray, and others, are a concern for this organization.

We ask that you give this legislation a “pause” and reach out further to members of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, particularly the Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council. Perhaps this legislation could be moved from implementation to a study, while further consideration is given to Tribal concerns.

We ask for an unfavorable report on HB 1433, at this time.

With appreciation,



Lucille W. Walker

Executive Director

Destination Southern Maryland

HB1433 - OPCP - Highway Designations - Piscataway

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO



Larry Hogan
Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor
James F. Ports, Jr.
Secretary

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 1433 – State Highways – Designations – Piscataway Highway

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1433 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 1433 requires the MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) to designate MD 210 as the Piscataway Highway. MD 210, known as Indian Head Highway, runs 20.86 miles from Potomac Avenue in the town of Indian Head, Maryland to the District of Columbia boundary in Forest Heights, Maryland. The road was named for the town of Indian Head, Maryland, where the highway begins at the Indian Head Naval Support Facility.

The MDOT already has an established policy and procedure for roadway dedication, naming, or renaming. Upon receipt of a dedication, naming, or renaming request, the Maryland Department of Transportation gathers the appropriate information to present to the Maryland Transportation Commission (MTC). Such requests include statements of support from local elected officials and state legislators, as well as statements showing broad community support. Upon review, the MTC then submits the request to the Secretary of Transportation for a decision.

House Bill 1433 does not clarify the exact meaning of "designate," but the potential renaming of a State highway or any public road poses challenges and costs including: reprinting of maps, replacing signs along and beyond the immediate highway area, changing mailing addresses, difficulty in locating an emergency 911 services call based on an older road name, upgrading emergency and other government mapping systems, and confusion and potential costs with legal or real estate documents that reference a road name that no longer exists. For these reasons, the MDOT SHA recommends the dedication process for a roadway or facility, as it visibly honors the requested individual, group, or entity with the appropriate signage and avoids the concerns enumerated above.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1433.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Murphy
Director of Planning and Capital Programming
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1275

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090