



## Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,  
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action  
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

## Marylanders Against Poverty

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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 594

State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission - Establishment  
Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act

*House Health and Government Operations Committee*

March 1, 2022

*Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs*

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 594**, which establishes the Maryland Reparations Commission, staffed by the Maryland State Archives. The purpose of the commission is to develop and administer a program for the provision of compensatory benefits to descendants of individuals enslaved in the State. Benefits include a cash sum, reimbursement for tuition at institutions of higher education in the State, and assistance with low interest loans and mortgages.

**African Americans continue to have the highest rate of poverty in the State of Maryland.** Currently 13.6% of Black or African Americans live below the poverty line. In comparison the total rate of poverty in Maryland is 9.6%. MAP continues to support legislation that address the inequities that cause poverty in our state. HB 594 can provide much needed benefits to African American communities. As demonstrated by Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his landmark essay published in The Atlantic, the legacy of slavery along with state-sanctioned discrimination in the form of post-slavery Jim Crow laws, real estate redlining and mass incarceration, served to handicap African Americans creating a stubbornly persistent racial wealth gap. Reparations provides an opportunity to condemn and directly address the detrimental long term effects that slavery has on African American communities in this state and country.

**Lawmakers across the country are proposing similar legislation to explore monetary reparations to address systemic racial injustices.** Several states including the federal government has taken up the debate and proposed legislation to study the possibility of providing reparations to descendants of individuals enslaved in America. Many in the debate recognize the long-term negative effects that slavery has on African Americans. As a state that participating in chattel slavery, it is important that Maryland also examine ways to address the systemic injustices that was caused by this practice. HB 594 is a first step in Maryland acknowledging its past history.

**MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 594.**

***Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.***