



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Samuel Desai, *Chair*
Emily Shrieves, *Vice-Chair*
Henry Meiser, *Secretary*

January 25, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Health and Government Operations
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB49 | Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation Act
Position: Support

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

The historic practice of redlining in Maryland, or deeming lending for housing, insurance, and other investing too risky based on demographic factors, has effects on communities of color today. A University of Maryland School of Public Health study¹, for example, found that health outcomes were worse on measures of life expectancy, teen-birth rate, & prenatal care in “risky” lending areas based on 1930s redlined-maps from the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation. Such outcomes in redlined areas (disproportionately communities of color) are caused by underdeveloped local healthcare systems and a lack of access to public parks/places to exercise. Furthermore, redlining is linked to community violence and ongoing segregation. A Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health study² found that 10 additional shootings occurred in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of Baltimore linked to redlining and ongoing economic segregation. Structural racism in these communities puts the next generation of students and job-seekers at a disadvantage, increasing barriers to higher-education (coupled with the already-rising tuition rates) and weakening skilled labor supply in Maryland markets.

HB49 creates a commission to study economic injustice and provide policy suggestions to reconcile wealth disparities for people of color. The commission guidelines ensure diverse membership including

¹ Huang SJ, Sehgal NJ (2022) Association of historic redlining and present-day health in Baltimore. PLOS ONE 17(1): e0261028. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261028>

² Uzzi M, Aune KT, Marineau L, *et al* An intersectional analysis of historical and contemporary structural racism on non-fatal shootings in Baltimore, Maryland. *Injury Prevention* 2023; 29:85-90. <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/29/1/85>

representation from lawmakers, historians, economists, legal scholars, anthropologists, African American-led organization leaders, and other state officials. These provisions will effectively weigh the economic, historic, and social implications/perspectives of racial reparations, tax exemptions, & other investments. The Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation Act is a first step forward in unraveling the remnants of Reconstruction-Era discrimination which mark our county and state history. Devoting time and resources to Maryland's youth of color is an investment in our present and future. The Council has voted in favor of **HB49** as it correlates with MYAC's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a) Initiatives to increase Maryland youth preparedness to function effectively in the workplace (Article VII, Section E) which the commission will protect through investment in underserved communities.
- b) Protecting the physical and social health of Maryland Youth (Article IV).
- c) Promoting anti-discriminatory legislative efforts for marginalized communities, including non-white racial demographic (Article VIII, Section C, Clause B)

Opposition to this bill argues the creation of a Commission for Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation is reckless and purely partisan. However, as demonstrated by the Commission's membership diversity and pursuit of unbiased research, its establishment is crucial in finding solutions for Maryland's wealth & health inequality. The legislation is *not* a proposal for compensation, reparation, or tax credits without substantial evidence to provide merit; rather, it will serve to predict the implications of such fiscal policy & recommend equitable legislative measures. Accountability for the Commission will be ensured through appropriate oversight by a State entity and its annual finding/recommendation report as described in the bill's language.

The establishment of the Commission for Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation will exercise the Maryland General Assembly's duty to provide equal opportunity to all Marylanders, regardless of race. The Council believes that measures addressing historical and present discrimination will benefit Maryland youth today and secure a level playing-field for youth in the future. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB49** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,



Samuel Desai, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council