



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 22, 2023

HB 339

Maryland Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission – Reporting and Sunset Extension Health and Government Operations Committee

Good Afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 339 for consideration. First, I would like to recognize and thank Madam Chair for championing [HB 307](#), which established [the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(MLTRC\)](#) in 2019. This was a historic piece of legislation, which created the first Commission in the United States to research cases of racially motivated lynchings and hold public meetings and regional hearings where a lynching of an African American by a white mob has been documented. In 2023, I am honored to sponsor this bill that would extend the reporting and sunset for MLTRC by two years.

Sponsor Amendment

In consultation with the Commission, Maryland Office of the Attorney General and Maryland State Archives, I am offering a sponsor amendment that would extend the reporting *and* sunset for the Commission by **two years**.

- Final submission of final report: On or before December 1, **2025**.
- Sunset of Commission: June 30, **2026**

Background

According to the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, racial terror lynching is defined as “the unlawful killing of an African American by white mob violence, often with the apparent complicity of state and local officials, intended to incite racial terror and subservience to white supremacy.”¹ For several years, the [Equal Justice Initiative \(EJI\)](#) has researched and documented more than 4,084 racial terror lynchings across twelve Southern states between 1877 and 1950. Additionally, EJI has documented more than 300 racial terror lynchings across other states, including Maryland.² As of April 2022, the [Maryland Lynching Memorial Project](#) reports at least 38 documented cases of racial terror lynchings, which spans across the Counties we represent.³

¹ Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission Interim Report, 2020.

² Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, 2017 (3rd Edition).

³ Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, *Racial Terror Lynchings in Maryland*, 2022.
<https://www.mdlynchingmemorial.org/lynchings-in-maryland>

Work of the Commission

To research each of these cases, the Commission is charged with the following:

- Holding public hearings in areas where a lynching of an African American by a white mob has been documented;
- Make recommendations to address the legacy of lynching in the spirit of restorative justice.

To fulfill this charge, the Commission continues to meet regularly, has conducted five public hearings and gathers data and materials in the form of newspaper coverage, oral histories, letters, photographs, government documents, objects and other records. Most importantly, this Commission is committed to listening with compassion and authentically engaging the descendants and the communities where racial terror has taken place. In partnership with the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project and community coalitions in thirteen counties, the Commission seeks to build trust and move with intentionality in every public hearing, meeting and public engagement.

List of Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission Public Hearings

1. [Somerset County – November 5, 2022](#)
2. [Wicomico County – October 22, 2022](#)
3. [Anne Arundel County – October 8, 2022](#)
4. [Baltimore County – June 4, 2022](#)
5. [Allegany County – October 2, 2021](#)

Next Steps

The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission is entrusted with validating and honoring the stories, oral histories, and lived experiences of those who carry this generational trauma and in need of closure and healing. This is a significant task, which requires time, consideration, and care to build each case, honor the victims, and acknowledge the intergenerational harm inflicted on these families and our communities.

In 2021, [HB 297](#), which extended the Commission the first time, passed and was signed into law. As Monica Lindsey stated during the October 8, 2022 hearing in Annapolis, we must talk about it and figure out the path forward. The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission is finding that path forward with and alongside a diverse array of stakeholders to afford descendants, our communities and the State of Maryland with the opportunity for racial healing and social transformation.

I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report with the sponsor's amendments, which will ensure the alignment of the cross-filed bills.

Thank you for your consideration,



Delegate Jennifer White