

Legislative Hearings Witness Testimony

Bill Number: House Bill 0049
Indication of Support: Opposed (UNF)

Person Submitting the Testimony:
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Delegate Marlon D. Amprey, Esq., has, once again, introduced legislation (House Bill 0049) to establish a Commission for Economic Justice and Racial Reconciliation. Similar legislation was introduced in the 2022 regular season by Delegate Amprey as House Bill 0159.

The purpose of the proposed Commission is to study racial disparities in wealth and resources as a result of tax laws and systems in place in the State from the Reconstruction Era through the enactment of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. In addition, the Commission will be tasked to make recommendations relating to compensation of the State's African American communities for the racial disparities identified.

I have concerns about partisan factors that will play a role in structuring this Commission and the apparent foregone conclusions that suggest a reparations fund will be recommended to compensate the referenced communities.

The success of this Commission is going to be rooted in how it was initially formed. The composition of this Commission can take one of two forms: a non-politician commission whose members do not hold political office, or a politician commission whose members do hold office. House Bill 0049 outlines the membership of this Commission to be predominately composed of politicians who hold office.

When a Commission is comprised of politicians who hold office, the results can be significantly biased by partisan ideology. Let us remember the first Democratic drawn redistricting map submitted by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission – a group of politicians. A Maryland judge called that map a “product of extreme partisan gerrymandering” and ruled it unconstitutional.

My concerns about partisan factors influencing the composition of this Commission and biasing the results of its studies could be eliminated – or at least greatly reduced – by letting an independent commission serve in this capacity. This non-politician Commission would make the process more transparent and impartial in its findings and recommendations. This Commission could certainly invite input from the resource people identified in the proposed bill without naming them

specifically in the legislation. This proposed makeup of the Commission would also mitigate the projected expense of \$228,136 in FY 2023 by the Department of Legislative Services' analysis of House Bill 159 in the 2022 Regular Session.

Thank you for your consideration of my input in your vote on this matter.