



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

**Bill:** HB 0566 Commission on State and Local Government – Real Property – Confederate Naming Prohibited Bearing Confederate Names

**Position:** Support

**Date:** March 28, 2024

**Contact:** Debra Borden, General Counsel

Jordan Baucum Colbert, Government Affairs Liaison

Dear Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman and Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“M-NCPPC” or the “Commission”) initially voted to support amendments HB 0566. M-NCPPC supports the idea of a State and Local Government Commission to ensure renaming efforts are well researched and thought out. We therefore request that this committee give this bill a favorable vote. Given our expertise in this area, M-NCPPC welcomes friendly consultation with our Prince George’s and Montgomery Planning Departments as needed. We also encourage the State and Local Government Commission’s to consider our recommendations when considering implementation of this law.

**What this Bill Does.** As amended, this bill seeks to establish a Commission on State and Local Government Real Property – Confederate Naming Prohibited Bearing Confederate Names (State and Local Government Commission). The State and Local Government Commission is required to develop and implement a framework to identify real property bearing confederate names that is owned by the state or a political subdivision. It is also required to make recommendations regarding real property that should be renamed on or before October 1, 2031, and to report findings and recommendations.

**Dedication to Dismantling Systemic Racism.** M-NCPPC is committed to the goals of this Bill. M-NCPC is committed to confronting the legacy of racism and its ongoing effects and to using this equity lens in all our plans, policies, practices, and other work—including to ensure that staff understand and practice social justice in their hiring practices and work to dismantle their own

internalized biases. Montgomery Planning and Prince George’s Planning have a great deal of experience with street renaming efforts.

**Montgomery Planning:** Montgomery Planning worked at the behest of the Montgomery County Council to rename three streets in 2021 – these were three streets in Montgomery County named for Confederate soldiers that are now named after historic African American residents. In 2020, at the direction of the Montgomery County Council, Montgomery Planning undertook a review of county-owned and maintained streets and park facilities to identify those named after known Confederates. After over a year of research, three streets that had full name Confederate matches were renamed to honor local African American historical figures. It is a large undertaking involving: i) researching military rosters, pension records, census data, cemetery records, property and tax records, news articles, and other secondary sources; ii) cross-referencing data with street and park names; iii) working with the property owners along the streets to inform them of the process, receive input on new names, and provide support for changing of their address information in public records; and iv) coordination with police, fire and rescue, as well as county agencies regarding signage and mapping.

**Prince George’s Planning:** Prince George’s Planning also has experience with conducting research related to street renaming. There were multiple inquiries related to the process, but no formal submissions were made and processed. There is more work to be done and the Commission supports this effort, but experience has shown that it will certainly take more than three years to complete. In Prince George’s County the Planning Department served on the County’s Responsible Legacy Task Force a few years ago; below is a link to their final report - <https://pgccouncil.us/DocumentCenter/View/7510/RLTF-Final-Report>

**Clarify and Expand Language.** It is important to clearly define the connections to the “Confederacy” that must be researched as part of this undertaking. We would note that the “Confederate States of America” was not a sovereign state recognized by any government and was a group of American states in rebellion against federal authority for approximately four years. Montgomery County’s experience has demonstrated that references to the Confederacy often go well beyond names of military commanders and the recommended amendments in our position statement attempt to cover such scenarios.

In addition, technically many public streets are not “owned” by the political jurisdiction but have been dedicated to public use, so this language should be added. We would also offer an additional option for renaming to include commemorating the property at issue in honor of a non-Confederate of the same name, which some other jurisdictions (namely Alexandria, Virginia) have employed with some success. This option establishes the new honorific without the need to change physical addresses for the impacted property owners along the streets. We respectfully request this option be a part of the State and Local Government Commission’s discussion.

For these reasons, the Commission requests the Committee vote favorable on HB 0566.