



# NAACP

*Maryland*  
STATE CONFERENCE

March 11, 2024

Rules and Executive Nominations  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, Maryland

## HJ 0005 – Commitment to Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Open Public Discourse

Members of the Committee,

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons.

The vision of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race.

HJ0005 reaffirms the General Assembly of Maryland's commitment to the principles of free speech, academic freedom, and open public discourse by encouraging educational institutions, governmental bodies, and other entities within the State to uphold and protect the right of individuals to express dissenting views on matters of foreign policy without fear of censorship or retribution.

One of the principal objectives of the NAACP is to inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to seek its elimination. On January 2, 2024, Dr. Claudine Gay, Harvard University's first Black President, resigned amid a firestorm of controversy following a hearing at the US House of Representatives where she stood by her institution's policies and commitments to free expression for all students, refusing to submit to linguistic entrapment and Socratic dialogue meant to hamper her steadfast commitment to academic freedom and free expression, core values in higher education. These efforts to silence leaders via public discourse, authoritarian political action and to promote internment by way of retaliatory donor hostilities lacked judicial and legislative protection

capable of acting swiftly to intervene. As such Dr. Gay and the students she sought to protect from xenophobic, racist attacks and political silencing remained vulnerable and, in the case of Dr. Gay specifically, resulted in both political and fiscal disenfranchisement akin to that which underscored the types of Jim Crow terrorism that barred African Americans from institutions of higher education or demanded that they know their place to be seen, to toil, but to never be heard.

HB0005 seeks to ensure that students, faculty and staff within Maryland's Institutions of Higher Education remain free and protected in their efforts to engage in critical, meaningful and essential dialogue that stands to shape and promote the betterment of Maryland's underserved, subjugated and marginalized communities.

For this reason, the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP urges a favorable vote on HJ0005.

In Service,

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