



## **CHOPTICO BAND OF PISCATAWAY-CONOY INDIANS**

House Appropriations Committee  
General Assembly  
February 11, 20205

To Chairman Barnes, VC Chang and members of the House Appropriations Committee

The Choptico Band of Piscataway-Conoy Indians Council of Elders has permitted me on their behalf to voice support for passage of HB 794. We speak with one voice.

For nearly half a century we and other Bands of the Piscataway-Conoy have persisted in efforts to restore our History, Culture, Traditions and Place in our homeland.

In spite or because of this prolonged battle, we continue in our persistence in the knowledge that Identity and what it stands for, is a power that impacts not only who we are, but what we can become.

Cultivating and restoring the value of our culture is the solid ground we need and should stand on to enable our people in dealing with a complex and perplexing world. Our community/families are the support systems with shared responsibilities. However, lacking assets to balance the need for retaining our Identity while navigating a very complex world, we find

ourselves in a dark place, balancing personal and family and community realities without tangible assets.

We cannot flourish economically or educationally while struggling and expending our human capital to retain what makes us who we are as a people. Without similar assets extended to others in a struggle to recover from the impacts of Colonialism and exclusion, we see needed potential in HB 794 as a positive step in the right direction.

While the State of Maryland prepares to celebrate its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we see thousands of years of our history diminished and unheralded. As a people we have much to be proud of and this Bill, HB 794, will give our people a means to re-instill a sense of self and pride to succeed in today's contemporary society.

Our communities struggled for decades to get the State of Maryland to acknowledge our continued presence. In 2012 that struggle culminated in the passage of an Executive Order that gave us what we already knew we had, our identity. That is where it ended. After nearly Four Hundred years of seeing our way of life (subsistence practices, language, spirituality, family cohesion, leadership and loss of land base) taken from us without any form of compensation, it is only fitting that those who benefitted from our loss do what is right in aiding our recovery.

As citizens of Maryland we have and will continue to be as productive as our means permit. And we know we can and will do much more when given means to heal from losses we've endured for centuries.

In our discussions on HB 794, we do not see it as perfect, but as a commitment on the part of the State to begin a process for our recovery.

This is a sorely needed aid toward honoring, restoring and acknowledging our History, Culture and Traditions. This Bill gives us the needed path to travel, a path previously denied to us.

With our hearts, we shake your hands;

Rico Newman, Elder  
Choptico Band of Indians