



**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS TESTIMONY
HB971 - ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY CROWNSVILLE HOSPITAL
MEMORIAL PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Lawrence E. Walker, Executive Director
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives**

March 13, 2025

Appropriations

**The Hon. Benjamin S. Barnes, Chair
The Hon. Mark Chang, Vice Chair**

Good Afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Committee. My name is Larry Walker and I am the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. I am writing to express my strong support, with amendment, for HB971 - Anne Arundel County Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park Advisory Committee.

The creation of the Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park is a vital step towards acknowledging and addressing the complex history of Crownsville Hospital. This site holds significant historical and emotional weight for the community, particularly for those directly impacted by the hospital's troubled legacy. Establishing an advisory committee is crucial to ensuring that the park's development is guided by principles of:

- **Truthful Historical Representation:** The committee will be instrumental in ensuring that the park accurately and respectfully portrays the history of Crownsville Hospital, including its challenges and triumphs. This includes centering the voices of former patients, their families, and the African American community who were disproportionately affected by the hospital's operations.
- **Mental and Physical Well-being:** The park presents a unique opportunity to promote mental and physical health and well-being. The committee's recommendations will be vital in creating spaces and programs that foster healing and wellness, acknowledging the historical context of the site. In *Madness, Race and Insanity in a Jim Crow Asylum*, Antonia Hylton identified the manner in which our separate and unequal healthcare system has caused generational trauma, this committee can work towards generational healing.

- **Equitable Access:** Ensuring equitable access to the park for all residents is paramount. The committee's advice will be essential in developing strategies to remove barriers to access and create an inclusive environment.
- **Preservation of Natural Beauty:** The Crownsville site possesses natural beauty that should be preserved and integrated into the park's design. The committee can provide valuable input on sustainable development practices that protect the environment.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** In light of current and ongoing state budgetary concerns, the committee could help identify feasible goals, potential costs, and potential revenue streams.

We believe that the composition of the advisory committee is critical to its success. The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives possesses a unique perspective on community engagement. Therefore, we propose an amendment to Section (B) of HB971, which outlines the committee's membership.

Specifically, we recommend adding the following:

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, OR THEIR DESIGNEE.

I believe that with this addition, HB971 will create a robust and effective advisory committee that will play a crucial role in reshaping the Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park into a place of healing, remembrance, and community connection. I urge the committee to adopt a favorable report on HB971. Thank you for your time and consideration.