

Angela D. Wilson

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February 18, 2025

Senator Joann Claybon Benson
James Senate Office Building, Room 201
11 Bladen St
Annapolis, MD. 21401

RE: Support for SB469: Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act

Dear Honorable Benson,

First, let me introduce myself. I am Angela Denice Wilson, a direct descendant of Catherine "Old Cate" Barens, my 6th great grandmother. She arrived in Maryland around 1730 with Col. Abraham Barnes and is believed to have been the first person he enslaved. She was held in bondage at the plantation that later became known as America Felix Secundus, then Tudor Hall, and is now known as the Saint Mary's County Historical Society.

My ancestors were also forced to labor at Col. Richard Barnes' Montpelier Plantation, as well as at Sotterley Plantation and Saint Inigoes in St. Mary's County. Some were enslaved at the McPhearson Farm in Bryantown, Charles County, by the Edlin's of the Piscataway region, and in other locations including Maryland's eastern shore and the northern neck of Virginia.

I am in my retirement years and have spent 15+ years as a Family Historian. I have volunteered on multiple archaeology projects at Jesuit plantations with students and faculty from the Anthropology Department of the Catholic University of America, contributed to several documentaries for Historic Sotterley Plantation, and was featured in *Untold Truths: Exposing Slavery and Its Legacies at Loyola University Maryland*. I have also been acknowledged or featured in other books and news articles. Additionally, I am also a founding member of the White Marsh Historical Society, a member of the Sacred Heart / White Marsh Vision Committee for the African American Burial Grounds, and a supporter of the mission and vision of the Braxton Institute.

I wholeheartedly support **SB469 Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act (Maryland Reparations Study for Black Descendants of Enslaved Individuals)**.

Disparities in education, criminal justice, and economic opportunities between whites and the descendants of the enslaved are deeply rooted in this country's history of slavery, segregation, and

systemic racism. These disparities have been shaped by centuries of discriminatory policies and practices that continue to affect individuals and communities today. In the interest of taking up as little of your time as possible, I will briefly touch on a few reasons why I support establishing a Reparations Committee.

Wealth Gap: There is a significant wealth gap between Black and white Americans. The descendants of enslaved people, whose ancestors were denied access to land, education, and economic opportunities, continue to face barriers to wealth accumulation. The average white household has far more wealth than the average Black household, a disparity that has persisted for generations.

Redlining and Housing Discrimination: Historical policies such as redlining, which denied Black families access to home loans and housing in certain neighborhoods, have contributed to long-lasting disparities in wealth. As homeownership is one of the primary ways people build wealth in the U.S., Black Americans were systematically excluded from this opportunity.

Lack of Access to Capital and Entrepreneurship: Black entrepreneurs often face challenges in securing funding for their businesses, as they are less likely to have access to venture capital or business loans compared to their white peers. This limits their ability to create and expand businesses, further exacerbating economic disparities.

The Legacy of Slavery: The lasting effects of slavery are felt through these disparities. While slavery itself was abolished in 1865, the systems that followed, including sharecropping, Jim Crow laws, and discriminatory practices in housing and employment, built an economic and social foundation of inequality that persists today.

Intergenerational Impact: The descendants of enslaved people often experience the compounded effects of historical discrimination. The generational trauma and systemic disadvantages passed down over time make it harder for many Black families to break out of cycles of poverty, limited opportunity, and disenfranchisement.

Let us never forget—Our ancestors did not come here by choice. They were torn from their homeland, shackled, bound, and loaded onto ships, bound for a foreign land where they couldn't even speak the language, for to serve a masters who were not their God.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela D. Wilson