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Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

SB0587 – State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Felman, Vice Chair Kagan and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **Senate Bill 587**, which seeks to establish the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and recommend appropriate benefits for individuals whose ancestors were enslaved in the State or were impacted by inequitable government policies.

SB0587 addresses the enduring legacy of slavery and systemic discrimination that continues to affect marginalized communities in Maryland, including the LGBTQIA+ population. Historical injustices have created disparities in economic opportunities, health outcomes, and social acceptance. For instance, LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly those of color, face higher rates of discrimination, economic hardship, and health disparities. A study revealed that 41% of LGBTQ+ adults in Maryland find it challenging to cover daily expenses, compared to 30% of straight, cisgender adults. Additionally, 27% of LGBTQ+ Marylanders report food insecurity, higher than the 19% of non-LGBTQ+ residents facing similar issues.

Senate Bill 587 proposes the formation of the Maryland Reparations Commission, tasked with:

1. **Studying Historical Injustices:** The Commission will investigate the impacts of slavery and discriminatory policies on affected communities, providing a comprehensive understanding of these issues.

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2. **Recommending Reparative Measures:** Based on its findings, the Commission will suggest appropriate benefits to address the identified disparities.

This initiative is crucial for several reasons:

- **Economic Equity:** By examining and addressing economic disparities rooted in historical injustices, the Commission can propose solutions to uplift marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA+ individuals who disproportionately experience financial hardships.
- **Health and Social Support:** The Commission's work can lead to improved access to healthcare and social services for affected populations. Notably, 39% of LGBTQ+ adults in Maryland frequently experience symptoms of anxiety or depression, compared to 24% of non-LGBTQ+ adults.
- **Legal and Social Recognition:** Acknowledging and addressing past wrongs can foster a more inclusive society, reducing discrimination and enhancing the quality of life for all Maryland residents.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **Senate Bill 587**. This legislation represents a significant step toward rectifying historical injustices and promoting equity for all Marylanders, including those within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Best,

Ronnie L. Taylor

Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [We Can Do More to Support Maryland's 500,000+ LGBTQ+ Residents - Maryland Center on Economic Policy](#)
- 2.