

Testimony in Support of Maryland SB0587.pdf

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Testimony in Support of Maryland SB0587 – Maryland Reparations Commission

Adrian Holmes

Southern Maryland Resident

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2/25/2025

Good afternoon, Honorable Chair Feldman, Honorable Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of this committee.

My name is Adrian Holmes, and I am the President of Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation and a proud resident of Cambridge, Maryland. I am here today to express my unequivocal support for SB0587, the Maryland Reparations Commission Act.

This bill seeks to establish the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and make recommendations relating to appropriate benefits to be offered to individuals whose ancestors were enslaved in the State or were impacted by certain inequitable government policies; and generally relating to the Maryland Reparations Commission. This is a transformative opportunity to correct long-standing injustices and ignite economic revitalization in historically marginalized communities across our state. As a Southern Marylander, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of systemic disinvestment. Communities like mine have been left behind for far too long. Today, I urge you to take action and support this critical legislation.

Alpha Genesis CDC, has dedicated itself to honoring the legacy of Harriet Tubman and the countless enslaved ancestors who once called Dorchester County home. Because of our relentless efforts, a 13-foot bronze statue now stands at the Dorchester County Courthouse, serving as a beacon of resilience and strength.

Every year, during our Day of Resilience, we solemnly read aloud the names of those enslaved in Dorchester County—many of whom are direct ancestors of families living in our community today. Their legacies call upon us to act. It is our moral obligation to invest in the very communities that have long been denied access to opportunity. SB0587 provides the structure and framework to ensure reparations are identified, measured and distributed equitably via a commission that thoroughly understands the ramifications of enslavement and the effects there of.

SB0587 will enable the Maryland Reparations Commission to identify types of benefits appropriate for reparations which could include financial and mental health guidance and/or other forms of compensation that provide the infrastructure improvements these communities desperately need, ensuring every Marylander—regardless of their zip code—has the tools to succeed.

The Maryland Reparations Commission is more than just a bill—it is a moral imperative and a commitment to justice, equity, and economic empowerment. It also gives foundational support to SB0468, the Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act, these bills in tandem provide for the foundation and administration of our chance to rectify past injustices and build a future where all Marylanders have an equal opportunity for success.

I strongly urge the General Assembly to pass SB0587 that will lay the groundwork for change in communities where Marylanders need these investments the most.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Adrian Holmes, President

Alpha Genesis Community Development

Gibson-Banks Center Testimony - SB 587.pdf

Uploaded by: Brandon Miller

Position: FAV



Testimony Concerning Senate Bill 587
State Government – Maryland Reparations Commission
Position: Favorable

To: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Brandon Miller, Ereka L. Barron Fellow, Monique L. Dixon, Executive Director,
and Michael Pinard, Faculty Director, Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law

Date: February 25, 2025

On behalf of the Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law (“Gibson-Banks Center” or “Center”) at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law,¹ we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 587 (“SB 587”), which would, among other things, establish a Maryland Reparations Commission to study and make recommendations relating to the appropriate benefits to be offered to Black people whose ancestors were enslaved in the state or impacted by inequitable government policies during the years 1877-1965. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report because the bill would: (1) confront and bring Maryland closer to addressing the history of racially oppressive institutions, policies, and practices in Maryland; (2) add Maryland to the growing list of jurisdictions that have created reparations commissions, which should inform the work of Maryland’s proposed commission; and (3) build upon examples of existing mechanisms within the state that embody the principle of reparative justice.

The Gibson-Banks Center works collaboratively to re-imagine and transform institutions and systems of racial inequality, marginalization, and oppression. Through education and engagement, advocacy, and research, the Center examines and addresses racial inequality, including the intersection of race with sex or disability, and advances racial justice in a variety of issue areas. The Gibson-Banks Center strives to contribute to a future in Maryland and across the country where slavery and its vestiges no longer negatively impact the experiences, outcomes, and life circumstances of Black people and prevent the realization of the promise of equal citizenship. It is with this background that we support SB 587, which is a long overdue step

¹ This written testimony is submitted on behalf of the Gibson-Banks Center and not on behalf of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law or the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

toward studying and making amends for Maryland's role in authorizing, supporting, and reinforcing dehumanizing and discriminatory policies and practices against Black people.

SB 587 Will Examine and Begin to Address a Long and Shameful History of Government-Sanctioned Racism and Pervasive Racial Discrimination in Maryland That Has Led to Ongoing Racial Disparities.

From the time of its founding as a colony in 1634 until slavery's abolition in the state in 1864, the state of Maryland and its residents accumulated wealth, power, and privilege off of the brutal enslavement of Africans and their descendants.² Legislative action facilitated the expansion of chattel slavery in Maryland. In 1664, the Maryland General Assembly codified lifetime and hereditary slavery for enslaved Black people.³ The law also consolidated a strict color line by providing that children borne of a marriage between an enslaved Black man and a white woman would be born enslaved.⁴ Against this legal backdrop and pursuant to the growing demand for tobacco, slavery in Maryland boomed as "[s]laves no longer dribbled into Maryland in small numbers . . . Rather, they entered the colony by the boatful, crowded into the holds of ships under the worst of conditions."⁵ Nearly 100,000 enslaved people entered Maryland in the three quarters of a century prior to the American Revolution, and by 1750 about 1/3 of the state population was Black.⁶

As they labored on the tobacco plantations that fueled the state's economy, enslaved Black people endured cruel and debilitating conditions, deadly diseases, and the relentless assault on dignity inherent in the institution of slavery.⁷ As the Cotton Revolution took off in more southern states, enslaved Black people were subjected to a Second Middle Passage that ripped apart and scattered families as slaveholders reaped the profits of trafficking husbands, wives, and children to buyers further south.⁸ The state legislature did not spare free Black Marylanders from racial subjugation, depriving them of civil and political rights.⁹ Lawmakers' efforts in this regard included prohibiting free Black people from testifying in freedom suits and imposing strict vagrancy laws on them, and enacting a state constitutional amendment in 1802 that disenfranchised free Black people.¹⁰

The abolition of slavery in Maryland in 1864, after more than 200 years of barbaric oppression, did not deliver justice or restitution to the institution's victims and their descendants, though the Maryland legislature was moved to seek compensation for slaveholders impacted by

² MARYLAND STATE ARCHIVES & UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN MARYLAND 1 (2020) [Hereinafter A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN MARYLAND], [HTTPS://MSA.MARYLAND.GOV/MSA/MDSLAVERY/PDF/MD-SLAVERY-GUIDE-2020.PDF](https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdslavery/pdf/md-slavery-guide-2020.pdf).

³ Archives of Maryland: Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, 1637-1664, Vol. 1, 533-34, <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000001/html/am1--533.html>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN MARYLAND, *supra* note 2 at 4.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.* at 5.

⁸ *Id.* at 11-14.

⁹ *Id.* at 10.

¹⁰ *Id.*; David S. Bogen, *The Maryland Context of Dred Scott: The Decline in the Legal Status of Maryland Free Blacks 1776-1810*, 34 AM. J. OF LEGAL HISTORY 381, 400 (1990), https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1765&context=fac_pubs.

emancipation.¹¹ Instead, the subjugation of Black people in Maryland continued, as both government and private actors worked to violate, harm, and discriminate against Black citizens. Jim Crow laws passed by the state and local governments between 1877 and 1965, such as laws mandating the racial segregation of railroad passenger cars, proscribing interracial marriage, and restricting voting rights in local elections, relegated Black people to second-class citizenship.¹² These legislative developments coincided with the terrorism of white vigilantes: the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission has reported that there is evidence of approximately 42 racial terror lynchings in Maryland.¹³

Discriminatory housing practices played a pivotal role in perpetuating racial inequality in Maryland. In 1910, Baltimore became the first city in the nation to pass a residential segregation ordinance that prohibited Black people from moving into a “white” neighborhood, inspiring a wave of similar laws in cities across the country.¹⁴ After the Supreme Court declared such laws unconstitutional in *Buchanan v. Warley*,¹⁵ private real estate actors across the state took it upon themselves to further the cause of residential segregation through practices such as racially restrictive covenants, which prohibited the resale of property to Black people.¹⁶

The problem of racially segregated housing in Maryland worsened in the 1930s when the federal government, through the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), published a color-coded map that graded communities according to the financial risks they posed to lenders and investors.¹⁷ Black communities were “redlined,” meaning that they were colored red on the HOLC maps, indicating that they were the least desirable candidates for mortgages and other investments.¹⁸ Black residents in these areas accordingly struggled to access loans and suffered discrimination from mortgage lenders and real estate brokers as well as overall disinvestment.¹⁹ As white Marylanders ascended to the status of middle-class homeowners and established

¹¹ Archives of Maryland: Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, 1867, Vol. 133, 4559-60, <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000133/html/am133--4559.html>.

¹² 107 Op. Atty. Gen. Md. 140, 141 (2022), <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Opinions%20Documents/2022/107oag140.pdf>.

¹³ MARYLAND LYNCHING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT 6-7 (Sept. 18, 2020), <https://msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/pdf/interim-report.pdf>.

¹⁴ DENNIS PATRICK HALPIN, A BROTHERHOOD OF LIBERTY BLACK RECONSTRUCTION AND ITS LEGACIES IN BALTIMORE, 1865-1920, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 162-176 (2019), Matthew Yglesias, *How Baltimore Invented Neighborhood Segregation*, VOX (May. 10, 2015), <https://www.vox.com/2015/5/10/8578077/baltimore-segregation-pietila>; Garrett Power, *Apartheid Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910-1913*, 42 MD. L. REV. 289 (1983), <https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mlr/vol42/iss2/4/>.

¹⁵ 245 U.S. 60 (1917).

¹⁶ See, e.g., Power, *supra* note 14, at 319; MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION OF JUST COMMUNITIES, SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL NEIGHBORHOODS 13 (2024) [Hereinafter SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL], <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Just-Communities/Documents/Baseline-Report.pdf> (“Racially restrictive covenants, clauses in residential deeds barring the sale of homes to non-whites, were common in Montgomery County . . .”).

¹⁷ David Armenti & Alex Lothstein, *Baltimore’s Pursuit of Fair Housing: A Brief History*, MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE, <https://www.mdhistory.org/baltimores-pursuit-of-fair-housing-a-brief-history/>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ See *id.*; SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL, *supra* note 16, at 7.

intergenerational wealth, Black Marylanders were left behind and locked out of such wealth-building opportunities as homeownership.²⁰

The legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and other forms of 20th century racial discrimination live on in Maryland in ongoing racial disparities and contemporary injustices. In 2024, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Division of Just Communities conveyed that Marylanders of color, including Black Marylanders, face “bias in the rental housing market, mortgage lending, and housing valuation, and disparities in housing stability, homeownership retention, and intergenerational wealth creation.”²¹ By concentrating poverty in Black communities and fostering residential segregation, redlining also fostered the conditions for racially unequal public health outcomes. For example, a study focusing on Baltimore found that historically redlined areas suffer lower life expectancies.²² This history of racial subordination—through slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, and concentrated poverty—also connects directly to other institutions in Maryland, such as the criminal legal system, which continue to marginalize Black adults, children, and communities.²³

SB 587 Will Bring Maryland in Line with Other Jurisdictions That Have Begun Reparative Efforts, Which Should Inform Maryland’s Proposed Commission.

Legislatures in other jurisdictions have already taken steps toward repairing the harms of racial injustices. In 1993, the Florida legislature commissioned a study of the 1923 Rosewood race massacre, a white riot in a Black town that claimed the lives of dozens of Black residents and resulted in the burning down of all of Rosewood.²⁴ The report informed the eventual reparations bill that the governor signed into law on May 4, 1994.²⁵ The bill provided \$150,000 to each of the nine Rosewood survivors and a \$500,000 appropriation for property compensation for affected families.²⁶ The bill also set up a scholarship fund for direct descendants of

²⁰ 1937: *The Eugenics Color Map*, THE BALTIMORE STORY, <https://www.thebaltimorestory.org/history-1/1937-the-eugenics-color-map>.

²¹ SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL, *supra* note 16, at 2.

²² Shuo Jim Huang & Neil Jay Sehgal, *Association of Historic Redlining and Present-day Health in Baltimore*, PLOS ONE 1 (2022), <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261028>.

²³ See, e.g., JUSTICE POLICY INSTITUTE, RETHINKING APPROACHES TO OVER INCARCERATION OF BLACK YOUNG ADULTS IN MARYLAND 15 (2019), https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Rethinking_Approaches_to_Over_Incarceration_MD.pdf (“Maryland has the most extreme racial disparities for those incarcerated for long terms in the United States . . . These disparities are rooted in policing practices that target communities of color, a lack of investment and opportunity in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and an overly punitive sentencing, parole, and corrections system that focuses on punishment with insufficient attention given to programming and rehabilitative services that have been proven to improve public safety outcomes.”).

²⁴ C. Jeanne Bassett, *House Bill 591: Florida Compensates Rosewood Victims and Their Families for a Seventy-One-Year-Old Injury*, 22 FLA. ST. U. L. REV. 503, 513 (1994); *On This Day – Jan 05, 1923: White Mob Destroys Black Community of Rosewood, Florida*, EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE, <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/jan/05>.

²⁵ Bassett, *supra* note 24, at 503.

²⁶ *Id.* at 517-518; Victor Luckerson, *What a Florida Reparations Case Can Teach Us About Justice in America*, TIME (Sept. 10, 2020), <https://time.com/5887247/reparations-america-rosewood-massacre/>.

Rosewood families and minority Floridians more broadly.²⁷ Each year, up to 50 eligible students may receive up to \$6,100.²⁸

In 2019, the City of Evanston in Illinois established a subcommittee of its City Council to study the feasibility and viability of reparations policies relating to housing assistance and economic development.²⁹ In 2020, the City Council codified an expanded Reparations Committee to advise on funding the reparations initiative.³⁰ Evanston became the first city to materially redress its history of racial discrimination in 2021, when it created the Restorative Housing Program, which provides reparations for harms to Black residents stemming from the city's discriminatory housing policies and practices between 1919 and 1969.³¹ Approved applicants may qualify for \$25,000, which can be allocated toward housing benefits such as mortgage assistance or home infrastructure improvement, or fund cash payouts.³² The Reparations Committee plans on developing additional reparations initiatives through additional community outreach.³³

In 2020, with the enactment of Assembly Bill No. 3121, California became the first state in the nation to create a task force to study and develop reparation proposals for Black people.³⁴ The Task Force's mandate covered the history of institutions that engaged in racial discrimination and carried out harmful practices against Black people throughout the United States beginning in 1619.³⁵ In addition to recommendations on how to educate the public regarding the Task Force's findings, the bill charged the Task Force with recommending "appropriate remedies" that accord with international law and standards on reparations.³⁶ The bill

²⁷ Basset, *supra* note 24, at 518.

²⁸ Kate Payne, *Scholarships for Rosewood, Ocoee Descendants Are Set to Continue Despite DEI Ban*, Official Says, WUSF (Jan. 30, 2024), <https://www.wusf.org/education/2024-01-30/scholarships-rosewood-ocoe-dei-ban-florida-colleges>.

²⁹ Evanston Local Reparations, CITY OF EVANSTON, <https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations> [Hereinafter Evanston Local Reparations].

³⁰ EVANSTON, ILL., CODE 2-17-1 (2020).

³¹ Stephanie Kulke, *Overwhelming Support for Evanston Reparations Program, Survey Finds*, NORTHWESTERN (Oct. 24, 2024), <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2023/10/reparations-survey-conducted-by-northwestern-center-reveals-overwhelming-community-support-for-evanston-program-across-every-ethnic-and-racial-demographic-group/>; Michela Moscufo, *House Repairs, a Car, Grandkids: Where Evanston's Reparations Payments are Going*, NBC NEWS (Dec. 23, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/reparations-evanston-il-transforming-lives-black-residents-rcna173534>.

³² CITY OF EVANSTON, LOCAL REPARATIONS: RESTORATIVE HOUSING PROGRAM: OFFICIAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES 7 (2021), <https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showpublisheddocument/66184>; Rick Hutzell, *The Idea of Slavery Reparations Has Stalled in Maryland. Local Campaigns Could Change That*, BALTIMORE BANNER (Jul. 11, 2023), <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/opinion/column/reparations-evanston-rue-simmons-wes-moore-PTGMTWLFGBBCZJLFFFKX7VDVNU/>.

³³ Evanston Local Reparations, *supra* note 29.

³⁴ Wendy Fry, Erica Yee, & Rya Jetha, *California is the First State to Tackle Reparations for Black Residents. What That Really Means*, CALMATTERS (Jun. 29, 2023), <https://calmatters.org/explainers/reparations-california/>.

³⁵ Assemb. B. 3121, 2019–2020 Leg. Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2020). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB3121.

³⁶ *Id.*; In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted *The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, which outlined 5 forms of remedy and reparations: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. G.A. Res. 60/147, Basic Principles and Guidelines on

also required that the recommendations address how to calculate compensation and the logistics of such compensation.³⁷ The Task Force held 16 public meetings to help inform its mandated report.³⁸ During public meetings, it considered public comments, expert, and personal witness testimony, as well as extensive written submissions.³⁹ The Task Force issued its final report on June 23, 2023, setting forth hundreds of recommendations for repairing racism's harms.⁴⁰ Following the report, California's Legislative Black Caucus introduced 14 reparations bills addressing issues such as education, criminal justice, and civil rights.⁴¹ The legislature passed several of the bills in 2024, including one calling for an official state apology for California's role in slavery.⁴²

In 2023, New York became the second state to establish a commission to study slavery and its ongoing consequences.⁴³ The New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies examines, among other things, the institution of slavery as it existed in New York, the treatment and economic, political, and social conditions of Black people between the end of the Civil War and the present, and the role of the state and local governments of New York and the federal government in racial discrimination.⁴⁴ Like the California Task Force, the Commission is tasked with studying and making recommendations regarding the formulation and administration of reparations to reverse the injuries of racial inequities.⁴⁵

The Gibson-Banks Center urges Maryland legislators to follow the lead of the California reparations commission by including in SB 587 a provision requiring the commission to hold public hearings to inform its work.

SB 587 and the establishment of the Maryland Reparations Commission would also bring Maryland in line with local jurisdictions in the state with similar commissions. In November 2021, voters in Greenbelt, Maryland passed a referendum directing the city council to establish "a 21-person commission to review, discuss, and make recommendations related to reparations

the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (Dec. 16, 2005), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation>.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND DEVELOP REPARATION PROPOSALS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: "THE CALIFORNIA REPARATIONS REPORT" 4 (2023), <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/full-ca-reparations.pdf>.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Fry, Yee, & Jetha, *supra* note 34.

⁴¹ Lara Korte, *California Introduces First-in-Nation Slavery Reparations Package*, POLITICO (Jan. 31, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/01/31/california-black-reparations-bills-00138854>.

⁴² Megan Myscofski, *First-in-the-Nation Reparations Bills are Headed to Newsom's Desk, but Not Without Some Tension*, CAPRADIO (Sept. 12, 2024), <https://www.capradio.org/articles/2024/09/12/first-in-the-nation-reparations-bills-are-headed-to-newsoms-desk-but-not-without-some-tension/>.

⁴³ James Sanders Jr., *New York Takes Historic Step: Reparations Commission Announced*, THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE (February 29, 2024), <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/james-sanders-jr/new-york-takes-historic-step-reparations-commission>.

⁴⁴ S. B. No. 1163A, 2023-2024 Reg. Sess (N.Y. 2023), <https://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2023/S1163A>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

for African American and Native American residents of Greenbelt.”⁴⁶ The Reparations Commission has thus far examined issues such as the history of the Piscataway tribes who were original stewards of the land in Greenbelt and Greenbelt’s history of segregation.⁴⁷ The Reparations Commission is planning public educational sessions to engage the public and get community feedback.⁴⁸

Similarly, in 2021, the City of College Park unanimously passed a resolution charging the city’s Restorative Justice Commission with developing plans for concrete restorative actions to redress the harms against the Lakeland community caused by the process of urban renewal.⁴⁹ The Restorative Justice Commission pursues reconciliation and restoration for the Lakeland Community and promotes a community-centered vision for the redevelopment and revitalization of the neighborhood.⁵⁰ The Commission is organized in three committees: (1) Truth & Reconciliation; (2) Community Engagement; (3) Restorative & Transformative Justice.⁵¹

Reparative Justice Informs Existing Laws in Maryland.

The Maryland General Assembly has already taken steps to repair harms resulting from unjust policies and practices in the state. For example, in 2022, the General Assembly established the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund, “to provide funds to community-based organizations that serve communities determined by the Office of the Attorney General to have been the most impacted by disproportionate enforcement of the cannabis prohibition before July 1, 2022.”⁵² The fund is drawn from at least 30% of the revenues generated from adult-use cannabis, among other things.⁵³ The reform, which allocates funds to counties in proportion to the number of marijuana arrests in the county compared to the state from 2002 to 2022, reflects an awareness of the harms associated with the “War on Drugs” and a commitment to making amends.⁵⁴

As another example, in 2021, Maryland passed the Walter Lomax Act, which established a court-directed process of mandatory compensation for wrongfully convicted individuals.⁵⁵ By eliminating the discretion of the Board of Public Works to deny financial compensation to those

⁴⁶ Reparations Commission, GREENBELT MD, <https://www.greenbeltmd.gov/government/boards-committees/reparations-commission#:~:text=In%20the%20November%202021%20municipal.Native%20American%20residents%20of%20Greenbelt.>

⁴⁷ Shabnam Mojtahedi, *Reparations Commission Update*, 87 GREENBELT NEWS REV. 1, 7 (Nov. 23, 2023), <https://greenbeltnewsreview.com/issues/GNR20231123.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ Mayor & Council of the City of College Park, Resolution Establishing a Restorative Justice Commission (Dec. 14, 2021), <https://www.collegeparkmd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3355/21-R-25-Restorative-Justice-Commission?bidId=>.

⁵⁰ Kayla-Aliese Carter, Restorative Justice Commission Annual Report 2023, <https://www.collegeparkmd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5920/RJC-Annual-Report-2023>.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Cannabis Reform, HB 837, 2022 Leg., 444th Sess. (Md. 2022), https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/chapters_noln/Ch_26_hb0837E.pdf.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ The Walter Lomax Act, SB 14, 2021 Leg., 443rd Sess. (Md. 2021), https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/chapters_noln/Ch_76_sb0014T.pdf.

wrongfully convicted and providing a fairer and more straightforward process, the General Assembly reinforced the state's responsibility for facilitating the healing of those victimized by state wrongdoing.⁵⁶

By establishing a commission to study potential reparations benefits, SB 587 is a step toward redressing historical and current day racial discrimination and oppression experienced by Black Marylanders. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 587.

⁵⁶ *See id.*

SB 587 - Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: C. Anthony Muse

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY

SB 587: *State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission*

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee.

Senate Bill 587 seeks to establish the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and make recommendations on appropriate benefits for individuals impacted by historical inequality in the state of Maryland.

Maryland, like much of the nation, has a deeply complex history regarding racial inequities, from the era of slavery to modern-day disparities in wealth, education, housing, and healthcare. The lasting impact of these injustices continues to shape the lives of many Marylanders today. This commission represents an important step toward acknowledging and addressing the harm inflicted upon generations of Black Marylanders.

This bill proposes a structured, research-driven approach to examining the feasibility and impact of reparations. Specifically, the commission will:

1. Study historical injustices in Maryland and how they have contributed to systemic disparities.
2. Assess and recommend appropriate benefits whether economic, educational, or community-based ensuring that reparations are meaningful and impactful.
3. Establish eligibility criteria and processes for potential recipients, ensuring transparency and fairness in any recommendations.

In addition, the commission will rely on rigorous research, examining reparations efforts nationwide, evaluating past government policies, and considering the role of institutions that have historically benefited from these injustices. The goal is not just to acknowledge the past but to create a well-researched, actionable path toward equity.

While the bill does have a fiscal impact, the benefits of this work are immeasurable. By addressing historical disparities, we not only invest in justice but also foster economic growth, stronger communities, and a more inclusive Maryland.

Therefore, I respectfully urge the committee to give SB 587 a FAVORABLE report to advance this critical conversation for the future of our state.

SB587 Favorable 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: FAV

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 587
Favorable

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee;

Please give Senate Bill 587, regarding a Maryland Reparations Commission, a FAVORABLE report.

The consequences of enslavement have continued to affect Black people 160 years after emancipation. This is the result of us never truly coming to terms with the evils of slavery. Enslavement; the failures of Reconstruction; Jim Crow laws; discrimination in housing, loans, employment, education, voting access, and police actions, etc. have had negative effects on the upward mobility of Black people in the United States. (You can't pull yourself up by your bootstraps if you don't have bootstraps to pull yourself up by.) These wrongs can never be righted, but reparations are a way to acknowledge that the white people of the United States unjustly benefited from the oppression of Black people, and that we must attempt to make amends. As a white woman, I won't benefit from reparations. I may even have to pay higher taxes in order to help cover the costs. But I'm okay with that because reparations are the right thing to do. The proposed Commission is an important and long-overdue first step. Please give Senate Bill 587 a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Debi Jasen

Pasadena, MD

(yes, this is identical to the testimony for the other reparations bill)

reparations bill.pdf

Uploaded by: Edith Perry

Position: FAV



Southern Maryland Chapter

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Members of the Senate Education Energy and the Environment
Committee

Re: Senate Bill 587: State Government – Maryland Reparations Commission

The issue of reparation is quite complex and misunderstood. It highlights the racial divides that still exist among us. It's a pain we always try to hide, disguise, or completely forget. Reparations make one think of economic, political, and moral decisions that one must review with an equity lens. Our nation prospered from this evil, and many of our institutions, like the church, profited as well. It must be repaired.

Reparations, quite simply, mean repairing something that was broken. It is not just about monetary compensation. It is not the transfer of wealth from white people to black people; it is what this generation will do to repair the broken pieces of the racial disorder we have inherited from the past.

Forgiveness alone is one step in the long journey to reconcile our past with the present. As an African American majority organization who are descendants of slaves who were never compensated for their centuries of involuntary servitude, I can honestly say we forgave this country a long time ago, but we aren't reconciled. White plantation owners received reparation in the form of compensation for the losses they incurred from the Civil War and the end of slavery. Racism and greed have fueled fundamental injustice, and those attitudes have poisoned race relations ever since. DEI removals, Charlottesville torch carriers, George Floyd, Freddie Gray, and Breonna Taylor are proof that we haven't reckoned with the past.

We look to you as Legislators to lead us through the journey. Please do not fail us again. We ask for your favorable vote on Senate Bill 587.

Respectfully submitted,

Southern Maryland Chapter of National Coalition of 100 Black Women

2025 - SB 0587 - Maryland Reparations Commission.

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps Jr

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0587

State Government - Maryland Reparations Commission

****FAVORABLE****

TO: Sen. Brian J. Feldman, Chair; Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair; and the members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Co-Director, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network; Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 27, 2025

The Right Reverend James Kemp, Second Bishop of Maryland (1816 – 1827) once said: “When any country, and particularly a young one, finds that men whose principles are unfriendly to their peace and happiness are flooding in upon them, they may with much propriety declare that such men shall be placed under certain limitations and restrictions. But to do this and then to suffer their own citizens to steal said men from their own country cannot be defended on any principle. Further to extend slavery to unborn children is a thing for which I do not know even the shadow of reason.”

And, to quote our former Bishop, Eugene Taylor Sutton: “People in the United States, in the Episcopal Church and in the Diocese of Maryland have inherited our share of breaches and broken places, especially with our legacy of slavery. For generations the bodies of black and brown people did not belong to themselves, but were bred, used, and sold for the purpose of attaining wealth. Not only did our nation prosper under this evil institution, but our Episcopal Church profited as well.”

However, as Jesus teaches us, a structure with a broken foundation cannot hope to stand. The subject of reparations is mired in emotion; it is often mischaracterized and certainly largely misunderstood. It is a complex issue that involves economic, political, and sociological dimensions that are difficult to grasp without a willingness to engage more deeply than having a quick emotional response to the word. The issue highlights the racial divide among us, creates varying levels of resentment and suspicion, and accentuates a pain that has long plagued our country since its founding.



Reparations, at its base, means to repair that which has been broken. It is not just about monetary compensation. An act of reparation is the attempt to make whole again, and/or to restore; to offer atonement; to make amends; to reconcile for a wrong or injury.

And isn't that our collective work in this broken world?

This work will require honest reflection and a holy devotion to reconciliation. Forgiveness alone is but one step in the long journey to reconcile our past with the present. We need to repair the broken places and wounds that we have all inherited from centuries of the degrading treatment of our fellow human beings.

While the history of slavery is widely understood in the U.S., the continuing impact of its legacy is less understood. The symptoms and wounds of that old sin continue to poison our society and threaten the health of the Body of Christ of which we are all a part. After the hard-fought abolition of slavery, there was a fateful denial in our nation of reparations for freed African American people for their centuries of undeserved bondage, even though in many instances white plantation owners received reparations in the form of compensation for the losses they incurred from the Civil War and the end of slavery. Racism and greed fueled that basic injustice, and those attitudes have poisoned race relations ever since. From the implementation of Jim Crow laws, lynching, segregation, redlining, job discrimination and unequal funding for majority African American school districts, to our own segregated church demographics, we see that we have not fully reckoned with our past. We are not yet fully a community or a nation of love.

It is time for all of us to understand how power gained by force and wielded unevenly impacts African Americans in this country. We can all celebrate the tremendous strides that have been made in racial attitudes in our nation, and we are very proud of the accomplishments of many individuals who have overcome great odds to achieve success. But for the millions of descendants of American slaves who are trapped in a pernicious cycle of hopelessness, poverty and rage due to their real experience of racial segregation, redlining, inferior schools and the like, the widespread assumption that everyone can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps is a long way from being accurate.

They know that the odds are against them on so many fronts: they cannot change their environment, and they cannot change the color of their dark skin. All of these



factors have played into creating a lack of power for brown and black people. This lack is a social problem: it goes beyond an individual's character and will. It is time for all of us to move towards a place of acceptance of humans who want the same things we do, but who have not been found to be worthy of those desires by the dominant society.

The time to act is now. It will take courage and vision. But we firmly believe that true reconciliation and peace can only be achieved by repairing what has been broken.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report

Maryland Reparations Commissions.docx (2).pdf

Uploaded by: LaWann Stribling

Position: FAV



Maryland General Assembly
 2023 Session
 6 Bladen St Ste 425
 Annapolis, MD 21401

February 25, 2025

Support: SB0587- testimony in support of establishing a Reparations Commission and information Women Pioneers of Reparations

Hello committee members and chair. I am LaWann Stribling, born LaWann Pendleton to parents Warren Pendleton and Narvest Thomas Pendleton. I've been on an 11-year journey to trace my family heritage via [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Tracing my paternal side, I learn that my Grandmother Eleanora Pendleton Bailey, born in Washington DC, parents are Henry Pendleton born in Washington DC 1910 and Eleanor E. Taylor Pendleton born in New Jersey approximately 1910. My Great Grandfather Henry's parents are James Pendleton born in Accomack County Virginia 1869 and Great Great Grandmother Ida Smallwood Pendleton born in *Maryland* 1885. Her parents are my Great Great Great Grandparents Sarah Garner Smallwood born in *Calvert Maryland* 1867 and Henson Smallwood born in *Maryland* 1864. The 1870 census has *Harris Lot Charles Maryland* listed for the residence. By 1890 they were living in Petersville MD, moved to Washington DC in 1894 and back to Petersville MD in 1900. By 1937 they were living in Frederick MD. Henson's parents Hanson Smallwood born 1839 and Eliza Sinkfield 1844, my Great Great Great Great Grandparents were born in Maryland. My ancestors were farm hands, laborers, oystermen and servants enslaved in Charles County MD, Petersville, Frederick MD, Accomack County, Va, Madison Orange, Va, North Carolina and Florida. We deserve everything our ancestors built. The ability to have this service free of charge to search for your ancestors should be included with reparations!

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Thursday, May 18, 1738

The Lower House.

199

L. H. J.
Lib. No. 45



M ^r Aisquith	Col ^t Hanson	M ^r Rumsey
M ^r Kennard	M ^r Smallwood	M ^r Moale
M ^r Tho: Smith	Col ^t King	M ^r Sprigg
M ^r Hynson	M ^r Stoughton	M ^r Pemberton
M ^r Hammond	M ^r Henry	M ^r Wilkinson
M ^r Dulany	M ^r Goldsborough	M ^r Wright
M ^r Denton	M ^r Rob ^t Lloyd	M ^r Clayton
M ^r Sam ^l Smith	Col ^t Hooper	
M ^r Weems	Col ^t Colvill	

M ^r Waughop	M ^r Courts	M ^r Matthews
M ^r Read	M ^r Edw ^d Lloyd	M ^r Caswell
M ^r Swan	M ^r Trippe	M ^r Stoddert
M ^r Wilson	M ^r Brannock	M ^r Wootton.
M ^r Walt ^r Smith	M ^r Ennalls	

Col Hooper and M^r Courts sent to the Upper House with the following Message (see page 163)

The House adjourns untill 3 of the Clock in the Afternoon

p. 77^r
Vide
Black Book
No. 4
Letters
Nos. 63, 64,
66

Post Meridiem. The House met according to adjournment

The Door-keeper acquainting the Hon^{ble} Speaker that M^r Ross was sent with a Message from the Hon^{ble} Upper House to this House. Ordered that the Clerk of this House acquaint M^r Ross that He is commanded by the Speaker and the Hon^{ble} Members of the Lower House of Assembly to let him know that this House will not receive any Message from his Hands untill an Answ^r be suitably returned by one or more Members of the Upper House to that Message sent this Day by Col Hooper and M^r Courts and the manner be Settled of sending Messages by the clerks of either House, this House will then receive the Mesages accordingly.

The Clerk acquaints the House he discharged his Trust.

The House adjourns untill to morrow Morning at 9 of the Clock

Searching through Slavery files in Maryland I found a relationship between 2 families that owned slaves who were also lawmakers. According to Branson Cook Genealogy, "[Robert Hanson](#)" and Bayne Smallwood were among the General Assembly delegates who considered Acts involving impositions on negroes, imported liquor and Irish servants. One of the goals was to see to it that a minimal number of Irish papists (Catholics) were allowed to live in Maryland. This illustrates that some of our forefathers were quite prejudiced against certain races and religions, even though the Constitution, the Federalist Papers and other founding documents argued for equality of both. Of course, these Acts in Maryland were taking place about 30-35 years before the Revolutionary War, and the delegation was still loyal to the British Crown. It is also possible that they were simply following the desires of the British Crown and may not have believed in this sort of lawmaking. At least one thing is certain - general public opinion began to change before the ratification of the Constitution, with the exception of attitudes toward slaves. Slavery was still alive and well for more than a century after these Acts were considered. Census records in 1790 and 1800 show that both the Hansons and Smallwood's had quite a few slaves. One such person, Hoskins Hanson, had 32 slaves recorded in the 1790 Charles County census. (Hoskins was the probable first cousin of Mary).

1790 CENSUS (semi-alphabetical)

Henry M Hanson Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-0-0) 7 slaves - Image 13

Hoskins Hanson Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-3-4) 32 slaves - Image 13

John, of Jno Hanson Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (2-0-0) 14 slaves - Image 13

John, Senr Hanson Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-0-1) 12 slaves - Image 13

Walter Hanson Jr. Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-1-3) 13 slaves - Image 13

Samuel Hanson (Major) Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-2-4) 14 slaves - Image 13

Samuel Hanson of Walter Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-1-2) 9 slaves - Image 13

Saml Hanson of William Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-1-2) 9 slaves - Image 13

Samuel Hanson Sr. Esq. Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (1-0-2) 28 slaves - Image 14

Theophilus Hanson Not Stated, Charles, MD 1790 (2-2-3) 23 slaves - Image 13

Ethnicity Estimate

Nigeria	31%	Sweden & Denmark	1%
Ivory Coast & Ghana	18%	Additional Communities	
Cameroon, Congo & Western Bantu Peoples	18%	Alabama, Georgia & South Carolina African Americans	
Benin & Togo	13%	Early Virginia African Americans	
Mali	6%	The Carolinas, Maryland & Virginia African Americans	
Scotland	4%	Northern Virginia African Americans	
Senegal	3%		
Nigeria—East Central	3%		
Wales	2%		
Southern Philippines	1%		

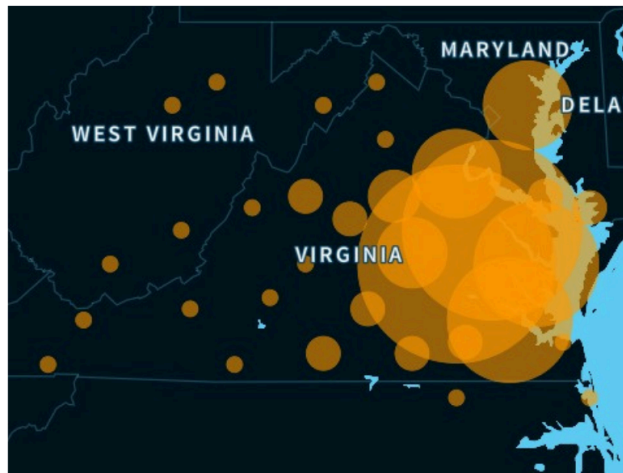
DNA Story for LaWann Sunita Patricia Pendleton

Results as of: 27 Feb 2023

Early History



1700 - 1725

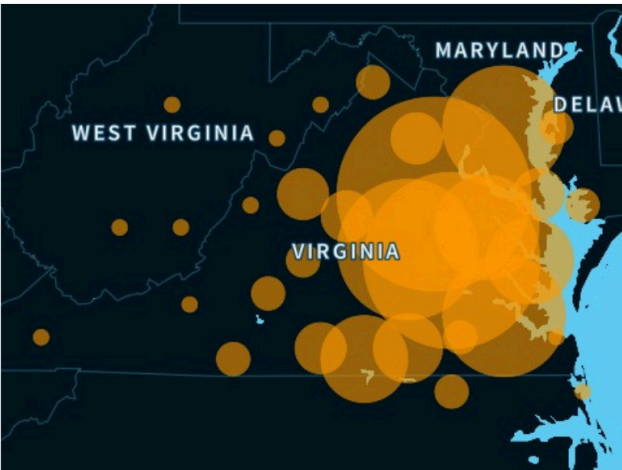


Early Virginia African Americans

DNA Story for LaWann Sunita Patricia Pendleton

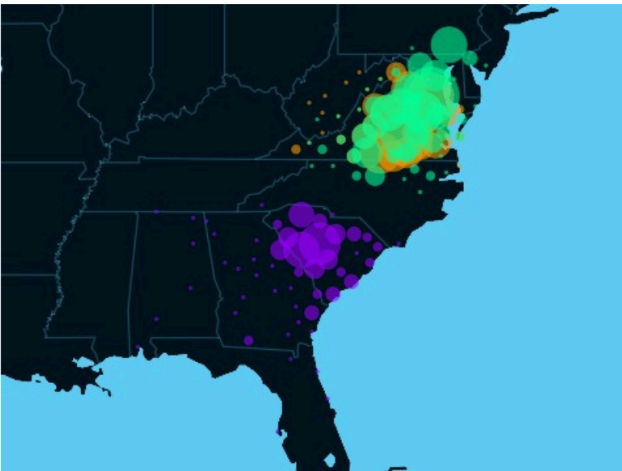
Results as of:
27 Feb
2023

1725 - 1750



Early Virginia African Americans

1750 - 1775

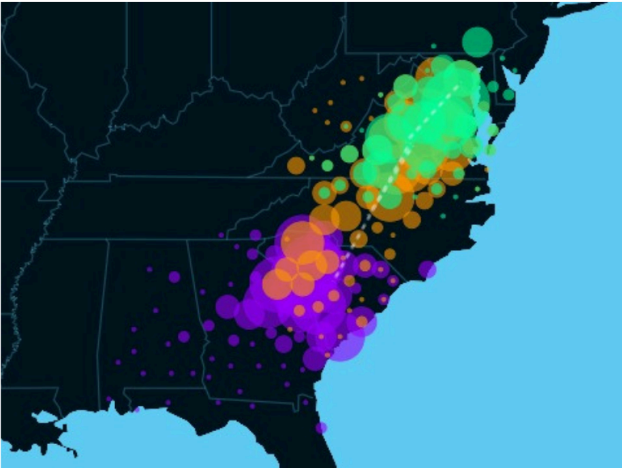


Alabama, Georgia & South Carolina African Americans
Early Virginia African Americans
The Carolinas, Maryland & Virginia African Americans

DNA Story for LaWann Sunita Patricia Pendleton

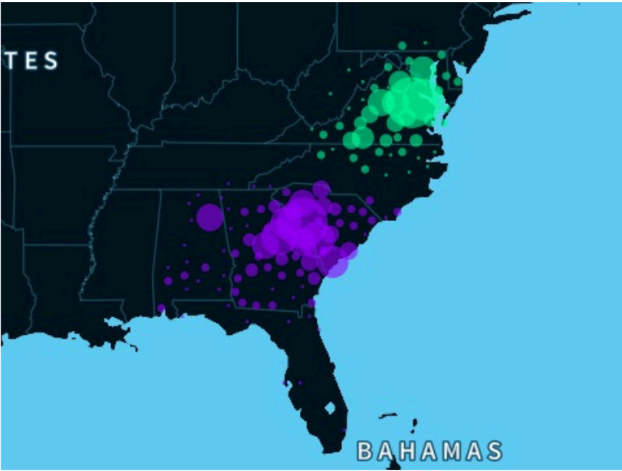
Results as of: 27 Feb 2023

1775 - 1800



- Alabama, Georgia & South Carolina African Americans
- Early Virginia African Americans
- The Carolinas, Maryland & Virginia African Americans

1800 - 1825



- Alabama, Georgia & South Carolina African Americans
- Americans The Carolinas, Maryland & Virginia African Americans

In closing it is my opinion that every Descendant of Chattel Slavery is owed reparations. Addressing the foundations of why I am still living paycheck to paycheck after over 30 years of being employed is essential for reparative justice. I come from generations of brokenness and found myself homeless and alone on my 17th birthday. I had my 1st child at 18 years old, raised him in a single parent household with no community or family support. He is 27 now and asked me why didn't I set him up for his future? He is comparing his life to the lives of some of his peers who grew up in a nurturing, supportive and financially stable home environment. The effects of Chattel Slavery, Post Reconstruction, Jim Crow Laws, Redlining Communities, Marginalized Banking and Education and The War on Drugs have created generations of poverty, generational trauma, curses, ptsd and lost hope. Reparations will begin to repair the effects of over 400 years of unimaginable living conditions. Reparations would provide a way for families living in disenfranchised environments to afford a way to provide a better education, better living arrangements, better choices in food and health care as well as freedom in the class hungry society.

Happy Women's History Month!

Women Pioneers of Reparations

by LaWann Stribling



TWENTY-EIGHT FUGITIVES ESCAPING FROM THE EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND.

What is **REPARATIONS?**

Reparations is the making of amends for what a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged. The act of repairing something. **Reparations for Slavery:** The application of the concept of reparations to the victims of chattel slavery and their descendants.

When did you first realize that your life was *marginalized*? For me it began in September 1985 when I entered the school St. Pius X in Bowie, MD. At 8 just before my 9th birthday in the 4th grade my classmates would not pass me anything the teachers handed out to be passed out to the class. At recess I sat by myself receiving endless amounts of stares and fingers pointed my way. I couldn't understand what I did to be treated this way except for the fact that I looked different. The difference being the kinkiness of my hair, the highly melanated skin I possessed and the NWDC dialect I spoke. This was my 1st experience of what hate felt like. This was just the beginning of 4 years of being called a Nigger and being told to go back to Africa almost every day. It really trips people up when I say I was witness to a cross being burned in a neighbor's yard off Mitchellville Road. I never really understood why these individuals who looked differently from me were filled with so much hate and anger. At that age I didn't understand the violent nature of chattel slavery or have the knowledge I have now of the truth about my ancestor's enslavement.

Now in high school I've had the opportunity to do many projects and write plenty essays dealing with American history. I was intrigued by the actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks because that's who we learned about during Black History Month every February. I did wonder who the other leaders for the plight of our culture were because how is their only 2. This curiosity had me pulling out our Britannica Encyclopedia sets and search for all the black people I could find. It was like my summer project every Summer. I read about Bob Marley which led me to learn about the Rastafarians. I learned about the [Black Panther Party of Self Defense](#) and the first mention of reparations. I was very intrigued by Huey Newton, Fred Hampton, Eldridge Cleaver, Assata Shakur, Bobby Seale and their willingness to uplift our community. Because I attended private school and lived in a nicer home with a pool in the back yard, I didn't see the inequalities, inequities or being marginalized until I became homeless at 17 years old. Having to repeat a 2nd year of 12th grade I signed up to take the elective African American Studies at Largo High School. This is the course that helped shape the Freedom Fighter I am today. I learned about Kemet, more detailed facts about chattel slavery and the activist that fought hard for the little bit of freedoms we currently lived with. From 18 years old to now at 46 I've been requesting and demanding reparations.



In 2011 I began the journey via [Ancestry.com](#) to trace my roots. I come from a broken family, broken home, no relationship with either of my grandfathers, barely saw my Paternal Grandmother, I remember seeing my Maternal Grandmother once, saw my mother 2 times before I turned 18 and didn't know much about anyone from her side of the family. It all came crashing down reading through the microfilm to see my ancestors amounted to an age, sex and skin tone- black or mulatto. I then began to ask myself why we have to pay for this service. This information was stolen from us by the individuals who stole, enslaved and imprisoned us. The demand for Reparations was spewing out at every turn. Still falling upon deaf ears.

In August 2019 The New York Times released a series of articles called the [1619 Project](#). It was intriguing to read about real stories of the past that have lead us to how we are living today. In 2020 after George Floyd and Breyanna Taylor were murdered I can feel a shift in the environment that I hoped would cause our residents to pause and really see what is going on

here in America. We are still living marginalized, enslaved, not respected and suffering emotionally, mentally, educationally and financially from the effects of Chattel Slavery. [Nikole Hannah Jones](#) I thank you whole heartedly for the work you put in on this project full of factual stories of our people that has been washed away by our enslavers.



The case of Reparations:

Have you heard of [Henrietta Wood](#)? Henrietta Wood was born into slavery in Northern Tennessee approximately 1819. After 30 years of enslavement the wife of her enslaver Jane Cirode, registered Henrietta as a freed slave in 1848. After 9 years living free, the daughter and son in law of her former enslaver wanted to recapture her for profit. They hired Deputy Sheriff Zebulon Ward from Covington, Kentucky to kidnap Henrietta and sell her. Wood was captured by Ward conspiring with Wood's employer to bring her on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River. Henrietta spent 1 year imprisoned at slave pen in Lexington, Kentucky. Due to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 Woods could not defend herself by trial or by testimony on her behalf. An innkeeper who felt empathy for Henrietta filed on her behalf. After 2 years her claim was unsuccessful due to her freedom paperwork being burned in a fire on Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1855 Woods was sold to the son of the former Governor of Mississippi Gerard Brandon.

When the Union Army Arrived to free the slaves after the Civil War, Brandon took his slaves to Texas to escape. Henrietta remained enslaved to Gerard until she signed an employment contract with the Brandon family in 1869. Not too long after Henrietta returned to Ohio with her son Arthur. In 1870 Henrietta began the process to sue the Brandon Wood family. After 8 years Wood vs Ward was litigated, and Wood was awarded \$2,500 of the \$20,000 restitution requested by her attorney Harvey Myers in 1879. This is the largest award given for slavery reparations. Henrietta moved to Chicago to be with her son [Arthur Simms](#) and used the restitution money to help afford his enrollment to Union College of Law, now Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law. Arthur practiced law for approximately 62 years in Chicago.



Have you heard of [Belinda \(Royal\) Sutton](#)? I hadn't either until the 1619 Project introduced me to her. Belinda Royal was born in Ghana, Africa in 1712.

She recalls smelling spice and seeing mountains living a joyful life full of love with her parents prior to her captivity and enslavement. At 63 years old after being abandoned by her enslaver she filed a petition with the help of her attorney to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requesting an income from the estate of her former enslaver in 1783. Her testimony describing the happy times with family back home in Africa contradicted the assumption that slaves were happy in their captivity. With that realization she won her claim and was awarded 15 pounds and 12 shillings annually ~\$17.98. Through further research it was found that she had to fight continuously for that award to be honored and paid. After a decade of missed inconsistent payments and further petitions here is her petition in 1793:

Text of Belinda's 1793 Petition

The Petition of Belinda an Affrican, humbly shews: that seventy years have rolled away, since she on the banks of the Rio de Valta, received her existence – the mountains Covered with spicy forests, the valleys loaded with the richest fruits, spontaneously produced; joined to that happy temperature of air to exclude excess; would have yielded her the most compleat felicity, had not her mind received early impressions of the cruelty of men, whose faces were like the moon, and whose Bows and Arrows were like the thunder and lightning of the Clouds. – The idea of these, the most dreadful of all Enemeies, filled her infant slumbers with horror, and her noontide moments with evil apprehensions! – But her affrighted imagination, in its most alarming extension, never represented the distress equal to what she hath since really experienced – for before she had Twelve years enjoyed the fragrance of her native groves, and e'er she realized, that Europeans placed their happiness in the yellow dust which she carelessly marked with her infant footsteps. – even when she, in a sacred grove, with each hand in that of a tender Parent, was paying her devotions to the great Orisa who made all things – an armed band of white men, driving many of her Countrymen in Chains, ran into the hallowed shade! – could the Tears, the sighs and supplications, bursting from Tortured Parental affliction, have blunted the keen edge of Avarice, she might have been rescued from Agony, which many of her Country's Children have felt, but which none hath ever described, – in vain she lifted her supplicating voice to an insulted father, and her guiltless hands to a dishonored Deity! She was ravished from the bosom of her Country, from the arms of her friends – while the advanced age of her Parents, rendering them unfit for servitude, cruelly separated her from them forever!

Scenes which her imagination never conceived of, – a floating World – the sporting Monsters of the deep – and the familiar meetings of the Billows and the clouds, stove, but in vain to divert her melancholly attention, from three hundred Affricans in chains, suffering the most excruciating torments; and some of them rejoicing, that the pangs of death came like a balm to their wounds. Once more her eyes were blest with a Continent – but alas! How unlike the Land where she received her being! Here all things appeared unpropitious – she learned to catch the Ideas, marked by the sounds of language only to know that her doom was Slavery, from which death alone was to emancipate her – What did it avail her, that the walls of her Lord were hung with Splendor, and that the dust troden underfoot in her native Country, crowded his Gates with sordid worshipers – the Laws had rendered her incapable of receiving property – and though she was a free moral agent, accountable for her own actions, yet she never had a moment at her own disposal!

Fifty years her faithful hands have been compelled to ignoble servitude for the benefit of an Isaac Royall, untill, as if Nations must be agitated, and the world convulsed for the preservation of the freedom which the Almighty Father intended for all the human Race, the present war was Commenced – The terror of men armed in the Cause of freedom, compelled her master to fly –

and to breathe away his Life in a Land, where, Lawless domination sits enthroned – pouring bloody outrage and cruelty on all who dare to be free.

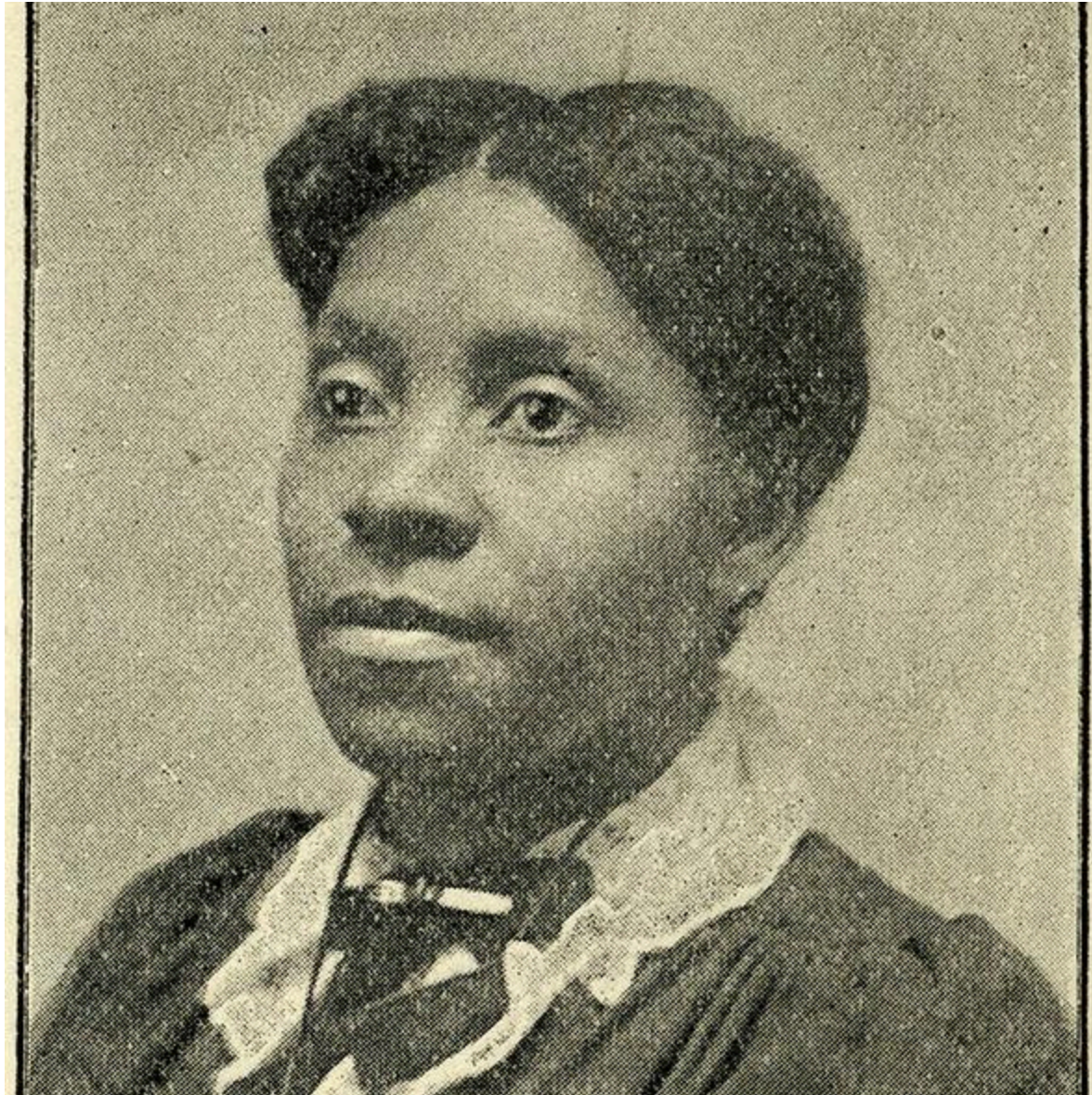
The face of your Petitioner, is now marked with the furrows of time, and her frame bending under the oppression of years, while she, by the Laws of the Land, is denied the employment of one morsel of that immense wealth, apart whereof hath been accumulated by her own industry, and the whole augmented by her servitude.

WHEREFORE, casting herself at your feet if your honours, as to a body of men, formed for the extirpation of vassalage, for the reward of Virtue, and the just return of honest industry – she prays, that such allowance may be made her out of the Estate of Colonel Royall, as will prevent her, and her more infirm daughter, from misery in the greatest extreme, and scatter comfort over the short and downward path of their lives.

Interpretations by Medford

Two parts of Belinda's account need to be interpreted rather than read literally. First, she wrote that she was captured as a twelve-year-old girl by "an armed band of white men." In fact, although Europeans sometimes kidnapped Africans on the coast, they were unable to go inland to capture slaves. It was African raiders and warriors from other areas that captured slaves and sold them to European slave traders on the coast in exchange for weapons, ammunition, rum (including New England and Medford rum), and other commodities. By substituting white men as her captors, Belinda (or Prince Hall, the abolitionist who is thought to have helped her) may have been arguing a case by placing moral responsibility where it ultimately belonged: on white Europeans and North Americans who initiated the Atlantic slave trade and profited most from it. The second part of Belinda's account of her childhood home that requires interpretation is her statement that she was captured in the sacred grove of "the great Orisa who made all things." "Orisa" is the term for "deity" among Yoruba speakers far to the east, in present-day Nigeria. Although some Yoruba deities were adopted by people further west, including Ewe-speaking peoples, these people gave deities the name "vodun." Other Ewe deities are known as "tro" or "trowo." The term "orisa" did not travel with them, and is unknown in the Volta region. The origin of the name "orisa" is a mystery. It may be that either Belinda or Prince Hall knew people who had been taken from a Yoruba-speaking area. By describing a god "who made all things," Belinda or Prince Hall may have wished to emphasize that Africans have civilizations and religious ideas that are worthy of white Christian Americans' respect.

This petition to the court was a reminder to the Northern Colonies that slavery existed during the American Revolution. It challenged the stereotype of the submissive slave and represented a new strategy to end slavery.



How about [Callie House](#)? I honor Callie House who was born a slave in Ruthersford County, in 1812. At 36 years old she founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Bounty and Pension Association in 1897. She along with Isiah Dickerson traveled to former slave states to encourage joining the organization. With many participants throughout the states the organization was eager to petition Congress for a bill that would grant payments (reparations), mutual aid for burial expenses. Their grass roots advocacy grew a membership to the hundreds of thousands formerly enslaved residents all over the country. This growth was unwanted by the government, and they used 3 agencies to find a way to stop this movement. The Federal Bureau of Pensions, The Department of Justice and the Post Office Department worked together to spy on the organization looking for anything they could find to end this uprising. On September 1899, The Post Office Department issued a fraud order, without evidence, making it illegal to send mail, cash or money orders. Callie resisted by invoking the 1st, 14th and 15th

amendment as well as hiring an attorney. Congress rejected the petition as if it were to not be taken seriously and postponed it indefinitely. House heard of the rejection and reminded the Commissioner that the Constitution granted residents the right to file grievances of redress.

When Dickerson passed in 1909 Callie became the leader of the MRB&PA and organizer. The restrictions from the Post Office Department placed constraints on the organization in the coming years. In 1915 House decided to take her petition to the courts. Johnson vs McAdoo was a class action lawsuit filed in US Federal Court requesting reparations for slavery in the amount of 68 million dollars. This amount was cotton tax money collected from 1862 to 1868 and held by the U.S. Treasury Department. A former slave H. N. Johnson led the charge as the Plaintiff against U.S. Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo. The United States Supreme Court denied the claim agreeing with the decision of the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia. To date this was the 1st litigation hearing regarding reparations for American Chattel Slavery in US federal court documented.



Honoring a local champion in Maryland fighting to create a Reparations Commission is County Council Member [Wanika B. Fisher](#) esq. In 2020 [Delegate Wanika Fisher](#) along with 45 other Delegates sponsored [House Bill 1201 the Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act](#) to establish a Reparations Commission for African Descendants of Chattel Slavery in Maryland. The bill was referred to committee after 1st reading along with [HB0121](#) the previous year. In 2022 Delegate Fisher along with 27 other Delegates sponsored [House Bill 0594](#), this bill was also referred to committee after 1st reading. On Wednesday March 1st, 2023 [House Bill 0875](#) sponsored by Delegates McCaskill, Ruth, Addison, Charkoudian, Crutchfield, Kaiser, Lopez, Phillips, and White will be presented at 1pm. [House Bill 0409](#) sponsored by Delegate Acevero will also be heard. These bills, again, will establish a State of Maryland Reparations

Commission. I will submit this as my testimony on my family's behalf as a Descendant of Chattel Slavery in Maryland.

[7-296.]

August 31, 1880

Page No. 3
 Supervisor's Dist. No. 3
 Enumeration Dist. No. 42

Note A.—The Census Year begins June 1, 1870, and ends May 31, 1880.
 Note B.—All persons will be included in the Enumeration who were living on the 1st day of June, 1880. No others will. Children BORN SINCE June 1, 1880, will be OMITTED. Members of Families who have DIED SINCE June 1, 1880, will be INCLUDED.
 Note C.—Questions Nos. 13, 14, 22 and 23 are not to be asked in respect to persons under 10 years of age.

411

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in Harris Let. District No. 5, in the County of Charles, State of Maryland
 enumerated by me on the 3d day of June, 1880.

A Jackson Snow
 Enumerator.

Name		Sex	Age	Color	Marital	Occupation	Birth	Education	Reading	Place of Birth	Place of Birth	Place of Birth
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	Smallwood, John B. 74	M	74	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Eliza Smallwood B. 73	F	73	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Robert Smallwood B. 47	M	47	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Smallwood B. 45	M	45	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James R. Smallwood B. 11	M	11	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Edith Smallwood B. 9	F	9	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Smallwood B. 8	M	8	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Eliza Smallwood B. 7	F	7	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Mary Smallwood B. 6	F	6	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Smallwood B. 5	M	5	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Smallwood B. 4	M	4	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	Eliza Smallwood B. 3	F	3	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Smallwood B. 2	M	2	W	1	Lookhouse				1	Maryland	Maryland
12	Barber, Columbus W. 42	M	42	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Barber B. 21	M	21	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Barber B. 19	M	19	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	William Barber B. 17	M	17	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Barber B. 15	M	15	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Barber B. 13	M	13	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Barber B. 11	M	11	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Barber B. 9	M	9	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Barber B. 7	M	7	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Barber B. 5	M	5	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James Barber B. 3	M	3	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John Barber B. 1	M	1	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
13	William, John B. 20	M	20	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 19	M	19	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 17	M	17	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 15	M	15	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 13	M	13	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 11	M	11	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 9	M	9	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 7	M	7	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 5	M	5	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 3	M	3	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 1	M	1	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
14	William, John B. 22	M	22	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 20	M	20	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 18	M	18	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 16	M	16	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 14	M	14	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 12	M	12	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 10	M	10	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 8	M	8	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 6	M	6	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 4	M	4	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 2	M	2	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 1	M	1	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
15	William, John B. 22	M	22	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 20	M	20	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 18	M	18	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 16	M	16	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 14	M	14	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 12	M	12	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 10	M	10	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 8	M	8	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 6	M	6	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 4	M	4	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	James William B. 2	M	2	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland
	John William B. 1	M	1	W	1	Fanner				1	Maryland	Maryland

Note D.—In writing entries in columns 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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<https://nikolehannahjones.com/>

Testimony for Commission for Reparations.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Bruno

Position: FAV

SB0587- Testimony In Favor of Maryland Reparations Commission

Nicole Bruno

13816 Park Ave Brandywine, MD 20613

Hello, my name is Nicole Bruno, and I have been a Prince George's County resident for 13 years. I am here today to voice my strong support for establishing the Maryland Reparations Commission.

In my own journey of learning and unlearning as a white person, I have come to understand that white supremacy is like the ocean we swim in—so pervasive that many white people, myself still occasionally included, often don't even see it, much like a fish unaware of the water it swims in. This blindness allows us to uphold systems and beliefs that not only harm others but also harm ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country.

Generational trauma—from racism, war, mental health struggles, and more—continues to live in our bodies and minds like a virus and we must acknowledge it as so; not just for our own health but for the well-being of our children. We are witnessing a pandemic of hate, cruelty, and fear tearing us apart and leaving hopelessness in its wake. Make no mistake—this is intentional and is being used like biological warfare.

Yet, I hold onto hope. Dr. King said, *"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."* What he didn't say, though I believe it to be true, is that the arc bends only when hope is turned into action. It bends when enough people demand something different, when policy protects rather than controls, when leaders have the courage to do what is right—especially when it feels perilous. In fact, history shows that the arc only ever bends in times of uncertainty—just as we don't grow when we are comfortable.

I know some will oppose this commission, arguing that now is not the right time or that our government has more pressing concerns. Others, out of fear, complacency, or a lack of education, may believe this is a relic of the past, an issue that no longer affects us. I do not shame those who are afraid—it is difficult to imagine safety, rest, and liberation for all when that has never truly existed. However, if history has taught us anything, it is that the past continues to repeat itself until, as Margaret Mead said, *"a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

Establishing a reparations commission is not the finish line—it is the starting point. It carves out space for imagination, creativity, and the kind of bold vision that has always driven progress. Throughout history, people have dreamed their way into new realities—whether it was Harriet Tubman envisioning freedom from slavery, our founding fathers dismantling monarchies, Ida B. Wells and Alice Paul fighting for women's right to vote, or Dr. King and Malcolm X advancing civil rights. The futures we take for granted today *began as radical ideas*. It is our collective responsibility to continue this work, to dream and build a just future. But if we do not explore this—if we do not even allow the conversation to begin—we ensure that history remains unchallenged and injustice continues unchecked. I believe Maryland has the courage to step into this moment with leadership and conviction, and I am deeply grateful to live in a state that prioritizes protecting its most vulnerable as much as its most powerful.

Tricia Hersey, author of *Rest Is Resistance*, writes: *“We can imagine a way, a new world, and a new opportunity for us to be rooted in that liberation... People think imagination is just frivolous, that it’s a thing for children, that you’re daydreaming and wasting time. They want us to always be locked up and focused on work, production, labor. But to be able to imagine and wander, that’s where the ideas for liberation come.”*

As someone advocating for this commission, I also recognize the crucial role of white allies, which is why I am here today. Acknowledging historical injustice and working toward reparations is not the responsibility of Black communities—it requires collective action, solidarity, and support from those in positions of power. White support, when done with thoughtfulness, not only amplifies the voices of marginalized communities but also demonstrates a commitment to community healing and being in partnership for justice, equity, and reconciliation. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are the strengths of our country's legacy, not its burden.

Dr. King also said: *“However difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because ‘truth crushed to earth will rise again.’ How long? Not long, because ‘no lie can live forever.’ How long? Not long, because ‘you shall reap what you sow.’”*

I hope Maryland is brave enough to sow the seeds of hope and justice today. The future can look different than we imagined—but only if we dare to dream it into existence. Let’s begin by allowing this conversation to take shape.

Thank you.

FreeState_Justice_SB0587_FAVORABLE.pdf

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Position: FAV



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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.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

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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

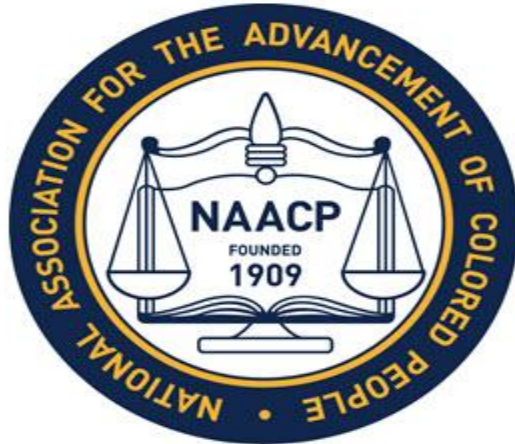
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- 2.

Support SB 0587-Reparations 2025.pdf

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Position: FAV



Randallstown

Po Box 731 Randallstown, MD 21133

February 20, 2025

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT SB 0587-State Government Maryland Reparations Commission.

Dear Honorable Chair Brian J. Feldman, VC Cheryl C. Kagan, and members of the committee:

The Randallstown NAACP is a chapter of the NAACP located in Baltimore County. The branch has over 500 members from Baltimore County and the region. May it be known the mission of the Randallstown NAACP is to secure equal rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons in Baltimore County and the State of Maryland.

Reparations is about repairing a debt owed to Black Americans. Reparations have to do with 250 years of slavery, followed by another 100 years of legalized segregation or discrimination and how that impacted the economic well-being of Black Americans.

Black Americans never really had a chance to create wealth. Over 250 years of slavery where they are unable to accumulate any capital. Then, Black Americans face the dragnet of discrimination and segregation that further prevents them from building any type of wealth. Black people were denied access to colleges, were denied access to high schools, and were denied access to higher paying jobs. Black people being denied access to the primary wealth-building tools, homeownership, federally financed loans, the G.I. Bill to be able to purchase housing that white Americans use to build their wealth. The forces to deprive us of wealth have built up over generations, and then only made worse by the fact that today Black Americans still face discrimination across the spectrum of American life. Public policy has created the Black–White gulf in wealth, and it will require public policy to eliminate it. SB 0587 begins us down the path to correct these injustices.

The Randallstown Branch of the NAACP urges a favorable report from the committee on SB 0587-State Government Maryland Reparations Commission.

.

yours,

Ryan Coleman
Randallstown NAACP, President
<https://randnaacp.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/NAACPrandallstown>
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Position: FAV

Maryland Reparations Commission

In Favor of SB0587

Tonet Cuffee
313 Pine Street
Hurlock MD 21613

RELATIVE OF HARRIET TUBMAN

2/25/2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Tonet Cuffee, and I am a proud relative of Harriet Tubman from Dorchester County, Eastern Shore Maryland. I am writing to express my support for SB0587. This bill presents a crucial opportunity to address longstanding disparities and promote economic growth in historically marginalized communities throughout our state.

As a relative of Harriet Tubman and a Marylander, I have lived the impact of systemic disinvestment on communities like mine. It is imperative that we rally behind this legislation to make a positive change.

The Underground Railroad is still under construction, which is why my family and I stand in solidarity with SB0587.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland has a rich history intertwined with the struggles and triumphs of Enslaved Marylanders, particularly in the realms of economic self-sufficiency and community resilience. Harriet Tubman's legacy serves as a beacon of liberation and empowerment, reminding us of our duty to invest in communities that have long been deprived of essential resources. SB0587 is an investment and repayment for all of the disparities that came along with slavery.

SB0587 is a strong positive step in the right direction. Descendants of slaves face significant inequalities in the United States, particularly in areas like economics (income disparity, wealth gap), education attainment, housing access, healthcare, criminal justice system, and employment opportunities, often stemming from systemic racism, leading to lower overall quality of life compared to other racial groups.

Please support SB0587.

Sincerely,

Tonet Cuffee

SB 587 - LBCMD Priority Bill.docx.pdf

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Position: FAV



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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February 27, 2025

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Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., District 23
Delegate Julian Ivey, District 47A
Delegate Andre V. Johnson, Jr., District 34A
Delegate Adrienne A. Jones, District 10
Delegate Jazz Lewis, District 24
Delegate Robbyn Lewis, District 46
Delegate Ashanti Martinez, District 22
Delegate Althea McCaskill, District 44B
Delegate Bernice Mireku-North, District 14
Delegate LaLoy Nkongolo, District 31
Delegate Edith J. Patterson, District 28
Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnik, District 21
Delegate N. Scott Phillips, District 10
Delegate Pamela Queen, District 14
Delegate Kent Roberson, District 25
Delegate Denise G. Roberts, District 25
Delegate Mike Rogers, District 32
Delegate Malcolm P. Ruff, District 41
Delegate Gary Simmons, District 12B
Delegate Deni Tavaras, District 47B
Delegate Kym Taylor, District 23
Delegate Veronica Turner, District 26
Delegate Jennifer White Holland, District 10
Delegate Nicole A. Williams, District 22
Delegate C.T. Wilson, District 28
Delegate Greg Wims, District 39
Delegate Caylin Young, District 45

Chair Brian J. Feldman

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 587 (SB587) - Maryland Reparations Commission.

This bill establishes the Maryland Reparations Commission, which will study and recommend appropriate benefits for Black Marylanders whose ancestors were enslaved in the state or who have been impacted by inequitable government policies. The Commission will examine historical injustices such as housing discrimination, redlining, and economic exclusion, and propose measures to address the long-term disparities caused by these policies. SB587 represents a critical step in Maryland's efforts to acknowledge and rectify systemic racial inequities that have disproportionately affected Black residents. **This bill is a 2025 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

Reparations are not unprecedented in the United States. Victims of the 1942 Japanese internment camps received reparations 50 years later, under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which authorized payments of \$20,000 after adjusting for inflation to each surviving victim of the internment camps that forcibly displaced over 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. The first payments were made in 1990, with the final reparations distributed in 1999. These payments significantly improved economic mobility for Japanese Americans by boosting homeownership rates, enabling higher education access, and reducing the wealth disparities that had been exacerbated by internment policies.

Even before this, following the Civil War, slave owners were compensated for their financial loss through the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862, which provided up to \$9,374.41 today after adjusting for inflation per freed enslaved person to former slaveholders. This act underscores the long-standing practice of the U.S. government prioritizing the financial well-being of those who upheld systemic oppression over those who suffered from it. More recently, in 2016, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act granted reparations to Guam residents who had suffered forced labor, internment, and property destruction during Japanese occupation in World War II. These payments acknowledged the harm suffered and provided financial relief for those affected.

Despite facing systemic barriers, Black Marylanders have been critical to the

economic and social development of the state. Historically, enslaved Africans built much of Maryland's infrastructure, including key port cities such as Baltimore and Annapolis, and played a foundational role in agriculture, shipbuilding, and commerce. Today, Black Marylanders contribute significantly to the state's economy. Black-owned businesses in Maryland generate over \$10 billion in annual revenue, employing thousands across industries. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Black Marylanders represent a substantial portion of the workforce in education, healthcare, and public service, sectors essential to statewide economic growth and quality of life. The Maryland Center on Economic Policy reports that reducing racial disparities in income and wealth could add over \$50 billion to Maryland's economy, demonstrating how structural reparative policies would benefit not just Black Marylanders, but the state as a whole.

By establishing a framework for reparations, SB587 will allow Maryland to take the first critical step in acknowledging and rectifying past injustices. While previous reparations efforts, such as those for Japanese Americans and Guam residents, were led by the federal government, Maryland has a unique responsibility to address its specific history of slavery, segregation, and discriminatory policies. This bill will create a structured approach to studying harm, identifying tangible solutions, and ensuring that the state holds itself accountable for its past actions.

A critical provision of SB587 is its focus on funding sources, including fees on private businesses that benefited from slavery and discriminatory government policies. This ensures that reparations are not just a symbolic gesture but are supported by tangible financial mechanisms that address historical harms. Additionally, the bill provides a clear process for verifying eligibility and distributing benefits efficiently, ensuring that those most affected receive the support they deserve.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports SB587.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

2025_ADOSAF_MD_FINAL-SB_587.pdf

Uploaded by: Vincent Fry

Position: FWA



ADOS Advocacy Foundation Maryland State Chapter

Senate Bill 587 State Government – Maryland Reparations Commission

ADOS Position: **Support with Amendments** To: **Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**
February 27, 2025 From: **ADOS Advocacy Foundation Maryland Chapter**

ADOS Reparations, Data Disaggregation and a Commission on ADOS Affairs

The American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) Advocacy Foundation is a national grassroots advocacy organization with statewide Chapters across the nation. Its mission is to secure through rigorous genealogical research and documentation, lineage-based cash reparations for descendants of U.S. chattel slavery from the federal government and to advocate for a transformative Black agenda. Maryland ADOS is a statewide Chapter with members across the State and whose mission is aligned with the national ADOS Advocacy Foundation.

The American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) Advocacy Foundation supports Senate Bill 587, which establishes a Maryland reparations commission to study and make recommendations for descendants of chattel slavery in Maryland because we believe Maryland's primary contribution to this national imperative lies in providing robust data and historical insights that inform and strengthen the federal program's design and implementation. Crucially, to refine and strengthen this vital bill, we propose several amendments to address the unique and ongoing harm caused by slavery and its legacy, specifically impacting American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS):

- The bill should mandate state and county agencies to create a data disaggregation plan within the Black/African American category to accurately identify ADOS needs.
- The bill should include two ADOS Maryland Chapter representatives, selected by the Chapter's Executive Council, on the Commission.
- The bill should add an economist and race researcher to the Commission to calculate unpaid wages from slavery in Maryland.
- The bill should establish a Commission on ADOS Affairs with two members from the ADOS Maryland Chapter, selected by the Executive Council.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission underscore the enduring consequences of slavery, Jim Crow, and systemic disadvantages for American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS). These historical injustices, combined with persistent disparities in health, housing, education, and economics, necessitate data disaggregation and a dedicated Commission on ADOS Affairs. This commission should collect disaggregated data, analyze the unique challenges ADOS communities face, and recommend targeted policies to address the legacy of slavery.

Precedents like Japanese-American and Holocaust survivor reparations emphasize targeted redress for specific harms. General economic, housing, and education policies, while necessary for a transformative Black agenda, do not constitute reparations for the unique injustices experienced by ADOS. Accurate, disaggregated data is crucial for defining reparations as a remedy for specific harm against a specific group. Establishing a Commission on ADOS Affairs, with ADOS representation, leveraging existing state resources and expertise, and including economic and research expertise are essential first steps toward achieving justice, ensuring any reparative efforts are effective and grounded in historical accuracy.

Given that, WE urge you to support SB 587 with the amendments submitted as written testimony by ADOS Maryland.

9007 Manchester Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20901, maryland@adosfoundation.org

Written Testimony for HB 1422_SB 587_ State Gover

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

Written Testimony for **HB 1422/SB 587**: State Government - Maryland
Reparations Commission - Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Health and Government Operations Committee and Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

This bill's synopsis reads: "...Establishing the Maryland Reparations Commission to study and make recommendations relating to appropriate benefits to be made to individuals whose ancestors were enslaved in the State or were impacted by certain inequitable government policies; and requiring the Commission to submit a preliminary report by January 1, 2027, and a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by November 1, 2027..."

The bill also states "Individuals impacted by historical inequality" means: (i) individuals having origins in **any of the Black racial groups of Africa**; and (ii) individuals whose ancestors were: 1. enslaved in the State; or 2. impacted by inequitable government policies..."

It further states "...The Commission shall: (i) study and make recommendations relating to appropriate benefits to be offered to individuals impacted by historical inequality... the Commission shall examine: (i) reparations payments made and benefits offered in the United States by the federal government, states, cities, religious institutions, and colleges and universities; (ii) types of benefits appropriate for reparations, including **official statements of apology, monetary compensation, property tax rebates, social service assistance, licensing and permit fee waivers and reimbursement, down payment assistance for the purchase of residential real property, business incentives, child care, debt forgiveness, and higher education tuition payment waivers and reimbursement**; ...(iv) inequitable government policies, the size of the impacted populations, and **how public and private institutions benefited from these policies**; and (v) any other topic deemed appropriate by the Commission..."

Recommendations made by the Commission under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall include: (vi) if monetary compensation is a type of reparation recommended by the Commission: ...potential sources of funding, including **fees paid by private businesses and organizations in the State that have benefited from the institution of slavery or inequitable government policies**; ...**The Commission may seek the assistance of State agencies** in conducting the study or making recommendations under this section..."

This is a discriminatory and racist bill. This bill discriminates against anyone who would not be determined by the "Commission" to be descended from "individuals enslaved in

the State”!! The entire premise of this bill is to **discriminate against non-descendants** of “individuals enslaved in the State”.

This is a bill that will primarily benefit African Americans. What about Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Alaska Natives Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, for example? These groups would **NOT** receive any **official statements of apology, monetary compensation, property tax rebates, social service assistance, licensing and permit fee waivers and reimbursement, down payment assistance for the purchase of residential real property, business incentives, child care, debt forgiveness, and higher education tuition payment waivers and reimbursement**...And, in addition, this Commission will seek to punish “**public and private institutions (that) benefited from these policies**” and “historical inequality”. So now we are going to **discriminate against all non-Black people and their businesses**, because of an ugly time in our country’s history that happened generations ago and that has nothing to do with current reality. No one can go back and change what happened, no matter how badly one wants to.

Also, and this is extremely important, **Free Blacks owned slaves** in the 13 colonies **since the 1600s**. By 1790, 48 Black people owned 143 slaves in Maryland. One Black Maryland farmer, Nat Butler, regularly purchased and sold Black people. In 1830, 13.7% of America’s Black population was free. Of that group, **3,776 owned a grand total of 12,907 slaves**. So, are we going to go after the current relatives those Free Blacks that owned slaves as well? Are we going to make sure that their current relatives and their businesses pay for owning other Black people?

This bill is the **very definition of discrimination and racism** and should **NOT** be allowed in any way!! It primarily **targets White/Caucasian Americans and their businesses** and is a violation of their civil rights!! In fact, this discriminatory and racist bill should be reported to the federal and state governments, to those departments that handle discriminatory issues and practices!!

In light of this, please **VOTE NO** on this bill to show Marylanders that you will not tolerate or have any part of discriminatory and racist practices in this state!!

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals
Mother of 3 and Maryland Resident

