



Chairman Korman and Environmental Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB-1184 on behalf of neighbors in my community who believe in preserving Snow Hill with truth, dignity, and integrity.

As a leader of Community Connecting Us, I work to unite our community and elevate the voices of our neighbors on issues that matter to us. One of those issues is ensuring that Maryland's Black history is preserved accurately and respectfully.

Snow Hill was one of Maryland's earliest free Black communities, a place of self-determination and resilience, home to 47 lots with houses, stores, and Bethel AME Church. But misinformation is threatening to distort its history, wrongly linking Snow Hill to the Jacob Tome School, a segregated institution that excluded Black students and forced the community of Snow Hill to relocate.

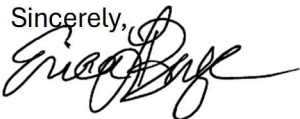
For many in my community, merging these two sites is not progress—it is painful. As one of my neighbors put it, it would be like allowing Jacob Tome to "stand over their land"—he said a "Robert E. Lee" over a site of Black resilience.

HB-1184 corrects this injustice by ensuring Snow Hill stands as its own state park, rather than being overshadowed. It uses Maryland's resources wisely, focusing preservation efforts on Snow Hill while allowing the Bainbridge Development Corporation and the Town of Port Deposit to manage the Tome School separately. It will expedite restoration efforts, so that elders in my community—who have been fighting for this recognition for years—can see Snow Hill honored in their lifetime.

This is not just a Cecil County issue—it is a Maryland issue, a Black history issue, and a moral issue. My neighbors and I urge you to vote YES on HB-1184 to ensure that Snow Hill's history is preserved with the respect it deserves.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Erica Berge

President, Community Connecting Us