

House of Delegates, Committee on Health and Government Operations

Testimony in favor of SB 0587

March 21, 2025

I urge your committee to give favorable consideration to SB 587 which would establish a Maryland Reparations Commission.

I am 74 years old, I am a white male, and I grew up in Maryland and have lived here most of my life. I have always been interested in the history of our State, and have learned a great deal about how the institution of chattel slavery permeated our institutions and our society for more than two centuries. I have also studied the legacy of slavery that persisted in the form of systemic governmental racism that our state practiced for at least a full century afterwards, and whose overt manifestations I still recall from my childhood in this State. It seems undeniable to me that our inability to eradicate the pernicious racial gaps in wealth, health, education and so many other aspects of our society is due in great part to our failure to make whole the human beings that were held in slavery, and to compensate their descendants for the burdens and inequalities they inherited from this heart-breaking history. The time has come to begin to right these wrongs and to make the reparations that justice requires.

I know there are many complex questions that must be resolved in any plan for reparations, but we must make a start by establishing this commission to study the issues and to recommend solutions.

Personally, I am motivated to a great extent by the values of my religious faith. The Union for Reform Judaism, the largest denomination of American Jewry, has squarely endorsed the need for study of reparations, as has the smaller Reconstructionist Judaism organization. The [URJ resolution](#) is worth your serious consideration. Careful study has led me to the conclusion that Jewish values and tradition demand support for reparations. I believe many Christian denominations have reached similar conclusions. But regardless of one's faith, the case for reparations seems to me compelling. Our state must take concrete action to try to atone for this historic injustice. I urge you to rise to the occasion by reporting this legislation favorably from your committee.

Thank you for considering my views.

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