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Ways and Means Committee  
130 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thursday, February 20, 2025

## HB0875 – Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means 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 **HB0875**, which seeks to establish the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education.

**HB0875** addresses the critical need for an inclusive and accurate educational curriculum that reflects the diverse histories and cultures of all Maryland students. Historically, educational content has often marginalized or omitted the contributions and experiences of Indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and various racial and ethnic communities. This lack of representation can lead to feelings of exclusion and disengagement among students from these communities.

Research indicates that inclusive education fosters a sense of belonging and improves academic outcomes for all students. For instance, studies have shown that when students see their identities reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to engage and succeed academically. Moreover, inclusive education promotes empathy and reduces discriminatory behaviors among students.

**HB0875** proposes the formation of a diverse commission tasked with examining and recommending enhancements to the state's educational standards. Key provisions include:

1. **Diverse Representation:** The commission will consist of members from various communities, including Indigenous tribes, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and representatives from African

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*FreeState Justice, Inc. is a social justice organization that works through direct legal services, legislative and policy advocacy, and community engagement to enable Marylanders across the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities to be free to live authentically, with safety and dignity, in all communities throughout our state.*

American, Latino, and Asian American communities. This ensures that multiple perspectives are considered in curriculum development.

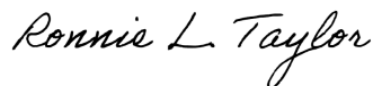
2. **Comprehensive Scope:** The commission's mandate includes exploring the histories and contributions of marginalized groups, such as the role of LGBTQIA+ individuals within these communities. This holistic approach aims to provide students with a well-rounded understanding of history and culture.
3. **Equity in Education:** Aligning with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the bill emphasizes equitable learning outcomes, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have access to an education that acknowledges and celebrates their heritage.

Implementing such measures can have profound impacts. For example, inclusive curricula have been associated with decreased absenteeism and improved school climates.

As an advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that arise from a lack of representation in educational materials. Students who do not see themselves reflected in their studies may struggle with self-esteem and a sense of belonging. **HB0875** represents a significant step toward rectifying these omissions and fostering an environment where every student feels valued.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0875**. This legislation not only addresses critical gaps in our educational system but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to equity and inclusion. By embracing the rich tapestry of our collective histories, we can provide a more accurate and empowering education for all students.

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

#### Sources:

1. [\*Why Truthful, Inclusive Education Benefits All Students — And How To Make It Happen\*](#)
2. [\*Through Ethnic Studies, Schools Push to Include Marginalized Perspectives | Edutopia\*](#)
3. [\*The evolution of multicultural education in the United States\*](#)
4. [\*The importance of inclusion when studying history\*](#)
5. [\*History in its entirety: How whitewashed history education leaves much of history, students out – The Badger Herald\*](#)
6. [\*Inclusive Education: Lessons From History\*](#)
7. [\*The Complexities of Inclusive Education: How Cultural Histories Shape the Ways Teachers Respond to Multiple Forms of Diversity – Equity-Centered Capacity Building:\*](#)