

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify remotely. And thank you, Sen. Sydnor, for the courage to introduce this bill.

I have anticipated this moment since I approached Speaker Peña-Melnyk to establish the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This bill is the beginning of the culmination of the Commission's work: it is the first of 84 recommendations for reparations for racial terror developed from six years of research, including 14 public hearings. It is a first step to provide some accountability for the State's simultaneous complicity in perpetrating and dereliction of duty in allowing these crimes to occur. We will never achieve justice for the men and boys who were murdered, or for their families, or for their communities that were terrorized and traumatized. And so, our recommendations are designed to hold the state, counties, and local communities accountable for their actions.

Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, stated that truth and reconciliation must be sequential. That is, we must acknowledge the truth of the past before there can be any meaningful reconciliation between perpetrators and the people that they've harmed. This apology, therefore, is a necessary first step in the reconciliation process.

There is a common misperception that equates reparations exclusively with monetary compensation. Reparations, however, encompass far more, including symbolic measures such as this apology.

The General Assembly failed to pass anti-lynching legislation in 1898 following the lynching of William Andrews, and again in 1933 following the murder of George Armwood. Including Armwood, the General Assembly's failure in 1898 contributed to the deaths of ten victims of racial terror lynching. You now have the opportunity to do the right thing and acknowledge the State's responsibility. And so I strongly urge you to support the passage of this resolution. Thank you.