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**To:** **Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**From:** **Jim Pauli and Cynthia Lifson, Co-Chairs, Legislative Committee, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section Council**

**Date:** **March 11, 2026**

**Subject:** **SJR 3, Apology and Acknowledgment of the State's Responsibility in Racial Terror Lynchings**

**Position:** **Support**

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The Maryland State Bar Association's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council supports Senate Joint Resolution 3 (SJR3), calling for the State of Maryland to apologize and acknowledge the State's responsibility in racial terror lynchings.

SJR 3 sets forth certain fundamental facts noted by the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the Commission). The Commission was authorized by the Maryland General Assembly in 2019. SJR 3 lists, among others, these basic findings:

- Between 1854 and 1933, there were 38 documented (emphasis supplied) cases of racial terror lynchings in the State of Maryland;
- No one (emphasis supplied) was ever held accountable for the commission of these crimes;
- Various State, county, and local government entities in Maryland colluded in the commission of these crimes and conspired to conceal (emphasis supplied) of the parties involved; and
- The State of Maryland failed to pass anti-lynching legislation (emphasis supplied) in 1898 and 1933.

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As acknowledged in the text of SJR 3, at a recent hearing by the Commission, the State's Attorney for Calvert County issued a formal apology on behalf of Calvert County for its involvement in lynching and racial terror. It is now time for Maryland as a whole to do the same.

The Maryland State Bar Association represents not only the specific interests of attorneys and their private concerns, but a deep and abiding commitment to the pursuit of justice. We, as members of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council, have a special place in the overall mission of the Maryland State Bar. As practitioners of mediation, we have the opportunity to engage in a confidential process where parties in dispute can speak to one another without fear of undermining their legal rights. Often, what we see in the process is the presence of pain, hurt, and emotional upset that money, in and of itself, cannot heal.

By way of contrast, what we also see in the mediation process is that a sincere acknowledgment of responsibility and an apology for inflicting pain is frequently the key that opens the door to a resolution of the specific dispute, to the appropriate assessment of damages, and ultimately to the healing of pain. All of this leads to peace between the parties and then to peace in our communities.

SJR 3 opens the door to all of us in Maryland as we grapple with the legacy of our state's history of lynching and racial terror. SJR 3 does not present us with specific answers on how to compensate those who either suffered from racial terror or those with ancestors who suffered from racial terror. Similar to the apology issued by the United States government for its role in the internment of US citizens of Japanese ancestry during World War II, SJR 3 is a necessary first step to begin the long and necessary process of healing in Maryland. We will be a better place following the passage of SJR 3.

For the reasons stated above, we at the Maryland State Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council support and urge a favorable report on SJR 3. If you have any questions, please contact Jim Pauli, Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Maryland State Bar's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council at [jim.pauli.ajs@gmail.com](mailto:jim.pauli.ajs@gmail.com) and 301.452.0449.