

**Committee:** Government, Labor, and Elections

**Bill number:** House Bill 166 - Public Health – Henrietta Lacks Commission – Establishment (Henrietta Lacks Commission of Maryland Act of 2026)

**Hearing Date:** February 10, 2026

**Position:** Favorable

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Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) supports *House Bill 166 - Public Health – Henrietta Lacks Commission – Establishment (Henrietta Lacks Commission of Maryland Act of 2026)*. The bill would create and establish the Henrietta Lacks Commission which will oversee “life sciences activities in the State and promotion of education of the life of Henrietta Lacks.”

There is no dispute – Henrietta Lacks is an American hero who changed the course of modern medicine through the contribution of her genetic cells. Johns Hopkins, the institution that treated Lacks and discovered these “HeLa” cells, [notes that they have been used worldwide](#) to “study the effects of toxins, drugs, hormones and viruses on the growth of cancer cells without experimenting on humans.” **These cells were taken from Lacks without her consent**, and over the years, “have generated millions of dollars in profit for the medical researchers who patented her tissue.”

While we are excited that this bill will promote and honor Lacks’ legacy, we also wish to emphasize the bill’s creation of a comprehensive body to “conduct bioethical oversight of life science activities” within Maryland. Planned Parenthood of Maryland supports higher levels of transparency and ethical oversight within the field and hopes that this bill will help guide future research by ethical standards.

We ask for a favorable report to honor the legacy of a woman whose life altered the course of cancer research and, therefore, health care itself. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Vice President of Public Affairs, Erin Bradley, at [erin.bradley@ppm.care](mailto:erin.bradley@ppm.care).