



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
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Delegate Melissa Wells  
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee  
145 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Wells and Members of the Committee,

**The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 552 - Independent Investigation of the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children.** This important legislation advances historical accountability, racial justice, and transparency by establishing an independent, fully empowered investigation to uncover the truth surrounding the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children and the children buried in unmarked graves on its grounds. **This bill is on the 2026 Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland priority agenda.**

For more than a century, the House of Reformation operated in Prince George's County as a State institution for African American youth. Historical records now confirm that hundreds of children, primarily African American boys, died while in State custody and were buried in unmarked graves. The existence of this neglected burial ground represents a painful and enduring chapter of Maryland's history. House Bill 552 acknowledges that these children were entrusted to the care of the State, and that Maryland carries a continuing responsibility to account for what happened to them.

House Bill 552 empowers an independent commission to employ modern archaeological methods to locate and map gravesites, utilize archival research and DNA analysis to help identify children buried at the site, and reconstruct institutional conditions and policies that contributed to this history. The bill ensures access to relevant records, provides for descendant and community engagement, and requires recommendations for memorialization, reburial, educational initiatives, and systemic reform. These measures move beyond symbolic recognition and establish a meaningful framework for truth-telling and accountability.

Maryland's history is not separate from its present. Naming the unnamed is an act of dignity, restoration, and accountability. For families who have carried unanswered questions for generations, this investigation offers the possibility of truth and closure. For descendants who do not yet know where their relatives are buried, it offers the chance for identification and acknowledgment. For communities whose stories have too often been overlooked, it offers recognition that the lives of these children mattered and deserve to be fully remembered.

Additionally, House Bill 552 ensures that descendant voices and community members remain central throughout the investigative and reconciliation process. The bill creates opportunities for permanent memorialization, formal repatriation procedures, and educational initiatives that allow this history to be taught and understood by future generations. Truth, transparency, and education are essential steps toward reconciliation and toward rebuilding trust.

Ultimately, House Bill 552 reflects Maryland's moral obligation to confront its past, no matter how difficult, and to ensure that those who were once marginalized are no longer forgotten. While we cannot change what occurred at the House of Reformation, we have a civic duty to provide dignity in death, recognition in history, and justice through accountability. By supporting this legislation, Maryland affirms its commitment to honesty, healing, and the full telling of its history.

**For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland urges favorable consideration of House Bill 552.**

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland