



TESTIMONY FOR SB0776

Commission on the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children - Establishment

Bill Sponsor: Senator Smith

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0776 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The state of Maryland established the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children in Cheltenham, Maryland back in 1873. It has a storied history of abuse, neglect and labor exploitation since its very beginning as the first juvenile detention center for Black boys in the Southern United States. About 300 youths are estimated to have died while in custody and were buried in mostly unmarked graves in two sections of the woods next to the facility.

The state is responsible for what happened there, but the full truth has never been uncovered and the number of children and their names are not known. This bill would fund an investigation into what happened there in order to provide closure to the families who lost children there and to help us understand what we should never let happen again.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.