



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 47**  
**Commission on State and Local Government Real Property Bearing**  
**Confederate Names - Establishment**

**\*\*FAVORABLE\*\***

**TO:** Delegate Melissa Wells, Chair; Delegate Kenneth Kerr, Vice-Chair; and the members of the House Government, Labor and Elections Committee

**FROM:** Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network; Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

**DATE:** February 10, 2026

To quote our former Bishop, Eugene Taylor Sutton: “People in the United States, in the Episcopal Church and in the Diocese of Maryland have inherited our share of breaches and broken places, especially with our legacy of slavery. For generations the bodies of black and brown people did not belong to themselves, but were bred, used, and sold for the purpose of attaining wealth. Not only did our nation prosper under this evil institution, but our Episcopal Church profited as well.”

As Jesus teaches us, a structure with a broken foundation cannot hope to stand. The subject of at hand is mired in emotion; it is often mischaracterized and certainly largely misunderstood. It is a complex issue that involves economic, political, and sociological dimensions that are difficult to grasp without a willingness to engage more deeply than having a quick emotional response to the word. The issue highlights the racial divide among us, creates varying levels of resentment and suspicion, and accentuates a pain that has long plagued our country since its founding.

This bill may be about names, but at its heart it is about reparations, which at its base, means to repair that which has been broken. It is not a concept that is just about monetary compensation. An act of reparation is the attempt to make whole again, and/or to restore; to offer atonement; to make amends; to reconcile for a wrong or injury.

And isn't that our collective work in this broken world?

This work requires honest reflection and a holy devotion to reconciliation. Forgiveness alone is but one step in the long journey to reconcile our past with the



present. We need to repair the broken places and wounds that we have all inherited from centuries of the degrading treatment of our fellow human beings.

While the history of slavery is widely understood in the U.S., the continuing impact of its legacy is less understood. The symptoms and wounds of that old sin continue to poison our society and threaten the health of the Body of Christ of which we are all a part. After the hard-fought abolition of slavery, there was a fateful denial in our nation of reparations for freed African American people for their centuries of undeserved bondage, even though in many instances white plantation owners received reparations in the form of compensation for the losses they incurred from the Civil War and the end of slavery. Racism and greed fueled that basic injustice, and those attitudes have poisoned race relations ever since. From the implementation of Jim Crow laws, lynching, segregation, redlining, job discrimination and unequal funding for majority African American school districts, to our own segregated church demographics, we see that we have not fully reckoned with our past. We are not yet fully a community or a nation of love.

It is time for all of us to understand how power gained by force and wielded unevenly impacts African Americans in this country. We can all celebrate the tremendous strides that have been made in racial attitudes in our nation, and we are very proud of the accomplishments of many individuals who have overcome great odds to achieve success. But land and monuments named for the those who fought to upheld the system of slavery is one more wound that need to be closed.

The time to act is now, on all fronts. It will take courage and vision. But we firmly believe that true reconciliation and peace can only be achieved by repairing what has been broken.

**The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report**