

**Testimony in Support of House Joint Resolution 8  
Apology and Acknowledgement of the State's Responsibility in Racial Terror Lynchings**

Good Afternoon Chair, Vice Chair and members of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present **House Joint Resolution 8 Apology and Acknowledgement of the State's Responsibility in Racial Terror Lynchings** for your consideration.

In 2019, we unanimously voted to establish the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the “Commission”) and in 2023 we unanimously voted to support legislation I introduced extending the Commission’s termination date to June 30, 2026 and its deadline to submit its final report to December 1, 2025. The Commission was charged to:

- hold public regional hearings in areas where a lynching of an African American by a white mob has been documented;
- receive recommendations from the public, including families and communities affected by lynching, for addressing, engaging, and reconciling affected families and communities, as specified; and
- make recommendations for addressing the legacy of lynching that are rooted in the spirit of restorative justice and may include the erection of memorial plaques or signage at or near sites of racially motivated lynchings.

The Commission delivered its final report last December and identified 38 victims of racial terror lynching—which was defined as “the unlawful killing of an African American by white mob violence, often with the apparent complicity of state and local officials, intended to incite racial terror and subservience to white supremacy”—across the state of Maryland.

The Commission specifically recommended that we enact legislation and support remedies in nine key categories:

1. Apology and Acknowledgment of Responsibility;
2. Material Reparations – proposing tangible investments to repair historical and ongoing harms;
3. Criminal Justice – addressing the absence of accountability and broader failures of the legal system;
4. Community Healing – fostering spaces and practices for grief, remembrance, and resilience;
5. Educational – integrating the history of racial terror into curricula and public education;
6. Mental Health – supporting culturally competent, trauma-informed services for descendants and communities;
7. Symbolic Reparations – including apologies, memorials, and public acknowledgments to honor victims and affirm the truth;
8. Media – promoting accurate, respectful storytelling to counter historical distortion; and
9. Funding, Implementation, and Monitoring – ensuring recommendations are resourced, enacted, and assessed with transparency and accountability.

House Joint Resolution 8 aims to issue an apology and acknowledge the State's complicity and negligence in allowing the perpetration of acts of racial terror lynching as well as take reparative actions as recommended by the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

For decades, the history of racial terror in Maryland was met with State sanctioned silence. Between 1854 and 1933, at least 38 Black Marylanders were taken by lynch mobs and murdered without due process. In every single one of these cases, the State deliberately failed to protect the Black community from lynch mobs.

Racial terror lynching was not simply the act of violence itself, but the impunity that followed. Local and State entities often colluded to conceal identities or looked the other way as citizens were dragged from jail cells and legal custody. Furthermore, the General Assembly failed to pass anti-lynching legislation in both 1898 and 1933, signaling that these murders would not be met with the full force of the law. This history has created a profound breakdown in trust between Black Marylanders and our legal and governmental systems.

House Joint Resolution 8 is a foundational requirement for the “spirit of restorative justice” mandated by the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It acknowledges that the State’s role in these crimes contributed to the destruction of Black wealth, the displacement of families, and the erasure of these tragedies from our collective public memory.

This resolution is a measure of accountability. We cannot expect to build a future based in equality and justice without acknowledging and apologizing for periods of our history where the State failed its citizens.

I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. White Holland", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Delegate Jennifer White Holland