



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB0341 - General Provisions - State Song - Repeal

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 11, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee (By Request – Departmental – Maryland State Archives)

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, uplift all members of our communities, and promote equity. DTMG strongly supports SB0341 because it will repeal Maryland's Confederate state song "Maryland! My Maryland!", removing a symbol of hate from the Maryland experience.

The deaths of George Floyd, Anton Black, and many others call attention to the structural and institutional racism before us and the need to continue fighting for a more equitable and just society. The Maryland state song is a Confederate embarrassment from the first line, which refers to President Lincoln as a "despot," through the fifth stanza, which urges Marylanders to "burst the tyrant's chain" – the chain being not slavery, but Lincoln's call for abolition. Maryland! My Maryland! was written to protest Union Troops in Baltimore and Southern Confederate soldiers used it as a Civil War battle hymn. Maryland did not adopt Maryland! My Maryland! as our State song until 1939 – a time when Maryland was sadly among our nation's segregated "Jim Crow" states.

Words matter. In classrooms and on school sports fields, we have been teaching our children to sing a song that glorifies Maryland's shameful slave-holding history. If we are ever to reckon with our racist past and successfully build a future that embraces and protects all, we must move beyond these symbols that foster hate, exclusion, and injustice. Following the violence of Charlottesville, the January 6th insurrection that threatened our Democracy, and the calls for justice by the Black Lives Matter movement, the current social climate makes this the best time for Maryland to topple our musical monument to the Confederacy and send a strong message that all are welcome in today's Maryland.

While efforts for police reform and prison reform remain at the top of DoTheMostGood's social justice agenda, symbolism and representation can lead to larger conversations and provide a needed avenue toward systemic change. Passage of SB0341 is one of many important steps the Maryland General Assembly can take this session to right the wrongs of the past.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB0341.

Respectfully submitted,

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