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SB0213

Favorable

State Highways – Designations – President Barack Obama Highway
Finance Committee – In the Senate - Hearing 2/10 at 1:00 p.m

Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, greetings – I am writing as a citizen who lives and commutes along Route 210 and the Rt. 210 corridor, and who is in full support of Senate Bill 213. There are many reasons to support this Bill, but I'll just expound on two of them.

Sometime after Christopher Columbus commenced his journey to the western world, he landed upon San Salvador—now it is called the Bahamas. It should be noted that San Salvador was not the original name of the island. The Lucayan people called it Guanahani, and Christopher Columbus renamed it San Salvador. What is more, Mr. Columbus later expressed a belief that the land upon which he came ashore was in South Asia, namely India. It is due to that belief, Mr. Columbus referred to the natives as “Indians.”

Today, the word “Indian” has become pejorative to the indigenous people, and it is the principal reason I do not call Route 210 by its given name. In cities and states all throughout this country, they are trying to correct the errors of assigning the many historical notes that we attribute to Christopher Columbus. People make great effort not to use the word, and in some areas of academia, the term has been eradicated from instruction and lecture. Changing the name would be a step to correct an obvious disrespect to a group of people who had no say so in the insensitive reference to their nationality and ethnicity.

The second reason to change the name is that the proposed new name represents a former President of the United States, a President who is admired, idolized, and respected by millions of citizens of this country – and by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Maryland citizens. To young Black and Brown Marylanders, President Barack Obama represents the belief that they, too, can achieve the American dream, and they, too, could rise to the highest levels of public service. To older Black and Brown Marylanders, President Barack Obama represents a stark contrast from America's dark past to a symbol of America's new era of change and promise.

Plainly put, changing the name of Route 210 would be a change from a negative reference to a people to a positive representation of the best of this country.

Therefore, I urge a favorable vote for Senate Bill 213.

Thank you

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