



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 121

State Government-Maryland Reparations Commission-Establishment  
(Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act)

Health and Government Operations Committee  
January 28, 2021

*Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs*

### Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
Behavioral Health System Baltimore  
CASH Campaign of Maryland  
Catholic Charities  
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland  
Family League of Baltimore  
Fuel Fund of Maryland  
Health Care for the Homeless  
Homeless Persons  
Representation Project  
Job Opportunities Task Force  
League of Women Voters of Maryland  
Loyola University Maryland  
Maryland Catholic Conference  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Community Action  
Partnership  
Maryland Family Network  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Paul's Place  
Public Justice Center  
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore  
Welfare Advocates

### Marylanders Against Poverty

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**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports HB 121**, which establishes the Maryland Reparations Commission, staffed by the Maryland State Archives. The purpose of the commission is to develop and administer a program for the provision of compensatory benefits to descendants of individuals enslaved in the State. Benefits include a cash sum, reimbursement for tuition at institutions of higher education in the State, and assistance with low interest loans and mortgages.

**African Americans continue to have the highest rate of poverty in the State of Maryland.** Currently 13.6% of Black or African Americans live below the poverty line. In comparison the total rate of poverty in Maryland is 9.6%.<sup>1</sup> MAP continues to support legislation that address the inequities that cause poverty in our state. HB 121 can provide much needed benefits to African American communities. As demonstrated by Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his landmark essay published in The Atlantic, the legacy of slavery along with state-sanctioned discrimination in the form of post-slavery Jim Crow laws, real estate redlining and mass incarceration, served to handicap African Americans creating a stubbornly persistent racial wealth gap.<sup>2</sup> Reparations provides an opportunity to condemn and directly address the detrimental long term effects that slavery has on African American communities in this state and country.

**Lawmakers across the country are proposing similar legislation to explore monetary reparations to address systemic racial injustices.** Several states including the federal government has taken up the debate and proposed legislation to study the possibility of providing reparations to descendants of individuals enslaved in America. Many in the debate recognize the long-term negative effects that slavery has on African Americans. As a state that participating in chattel slavery, it is important that Maryland also examine ways to address the systemic injustices that was caused by this practice. HB 121 is a first step in Maryland acknowledging its past history.

**MAP appreciates your consideration, and urges a favorable report on HB 121**

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*Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.*

<sup>1</sup> [http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles\\_2020-FINAL.pdf](http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2020-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>