

Testimony in Favor HB0121
House Judiciary/Senate Judicial Proceedings
Kalkidane A. Yesuf, Undergraduate at University of Maryland at College Park
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Position: In Favor

My name is Kalkidane A. Yesuf, I'm currently a senior at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD, currently studying Government and Politics and Black Women studies, a resident of Montgomery County, and a passionate advocate of reparations. I write here to urge the State of Maryland to support Delegate Fisher alongside the African American community regarding paying reparations to descendants of slaves from plantations which once resided in the State of Maryland and support HB0121. This bill would create a program that serves a purpose of providing benefits to one who comes from an individual/s of slaves in the State of Maryland. Any one whose ancestors were once a slave in this State would be eligible to receive benefits administered by the Commission. Many don't understand the systematic oppression that occurs. Though Black people have been "free'd" for years, slavery still has a huge effect on today's society.

As we progress in society we think that the system that was once built to oppress African Americans and Black people has changed but as we see things surely have not. Though "slavery" itself was obliterated, Black people make up more than half of the prison system here in Maryland. Black majority communities lack resources that communities of majority White people have. Whether it's better schools, daycares, food programs, and much more. Reparations being paid would help individuals and families be able to have a little push to be more independent, not be as excluded when it comes to "upward mobility", and able to be less financially insecure. The American Progress Association reported that Black people in the DC area have an unemployment rate 6x higher than White people. African Americans also have higher unemployment rates in regards to educational attainment levels and age cohorts than white people.

Passing House Bill 121 and paying reparations can help create more opportunities for Black people in the state of Maryland somewhat end this systematic oppression that has gone on far too long. It also means the State of Maryland acknowledges this significant disadvantage and wants to see equal opportunities for people whose families were once marginalized.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my statement for why I urge the passing this bill and what it can do for OUR community.

Kalkidane A. Yesuf

University of Maryland, Government and Politics, Black Women Studies