



AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF SLAVERY MARYLAND CHAPTER

Testimony before the Health and Government Operations Committee
House Bill 851
State Government – Maryland Reparations Commission – Establishment
(Maryland Repair Act)
February 20, 2024
****SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS****

The American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) Advocacy Foundation is a national grassroots advocacy organization with statewide Chapters across the nation. Its mission is to secure lineage-based reparations for descendants of U.S. chattel slavery from the federal government and to advocate for a transformative Black agenda.¹ Maryland ADOS is a statewide Chapter with members across the State and whose mission is aligned with the national ADOS Advocacy Foundation. Maryland ADOS supports House Bill 851 with amendments.

This bill seeks to establish a Maryland Reparations Commission to: 1) Develop a program and protocol for “compensatory benefits” to individuals who descend from enslaved persons in Maryland; 2) Determine eligibility for benefits administered; 3) Require “State agencies to assist the Commission in a certain manner; 4) Pay certain cash sums to certain applicants; and 5) Reimburse certain applicants for certain tuition payments.”

Problems with the Bill

The bill has three main problems – 1) The State has insufficient monies to reimburse for the centuries-long structural racism and pillage rooted in enslavement for descendants of chattel slavery in this State; 2) Fails to specify how State agencies should assist the Commission; and 3) Includes “three representatives of communities with **HIGH MINORITY** populations.”

Amendments to the Bill

ADOS Maryland supports the establishment of a Maryland Reparations Commission for **the limited purpose of:**

- 1) Requiring all State and County agencies to design a disaggregation data plan and protocol within the Black/African American racial category for collection, analysis, and reporting;
- 2) Include two (2) representatives from the ADOS Maryland Chapter on the Commission selected by the Executive Council of the Chapter that has experience in race relations and advocacy;



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- 3) Include on the Commission one (1) individual from two (2) families who descend from an enslaved person(s) in Maryland to be selected by Loyola University's Task Force Examining Loyola's Connections to Slavery and Goucher College's *Hallowed Ground Project*;
- 4) Include an economist on the Commission to calculate unpaid wages for the enslaved in Maryland; and
- 5) Establishing a Governor's Commission on ADOS Affairs and appointing two (2) members from the ADOS Maryland Chapter selected by the Executive Council of the Chapter.

A. ADOS Redress - Reparations

Reparations is defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as "a repairing or keeping in repair; the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury; something done or given as amends or satisfaction; the payment of damages."ⁱⁱ Conversations across the nation incorrectly define reparations, and ADOS advocates are often met with hostile dismissals that mischaracterize reparations as a "handout" or retorts such as, "you were never enslaved." These dismissals clearly indicate a lack of understanding of reparations and ignores the unique history and experience of ADOS that is rooted in enslavement and carried multi-generationally without specific redress. Moreover, the reparations narrative is consistently broadened to include "people of color," "BIPOC," non-ADOS Black people, women,ⁱⁱⁱ LGBTQIA+, and other "marginalized" communities. This inclusivity with other groups erases our history and ignores the unique experiences, needs, and impact of centuries-long pervasive and persistent policies and laws that have undermined and stifled wealth creation and maintenance for our community. **ADOS is unique, and has never received specific redress, as a group, for the uninterrupted, grave injustices that we experienced and continue to experience which have cemented us as a permanent underclass.** No other group in this country has experienced this level of brutality for 400+ years without redress.

B. Communities that Received Reparations

The U.S. has provided reparations for white families who enslaved Blacks during the Civil War to reimburse them for "property" lost.^{iv} Reparations were also paid to Japanese incarcerated and descendants of same who died during the Japanese internment for forced relocation by the US government into detention camps during World War II.^v Additionally, reparations were paid to Jewish Americans who were survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants,^{vi} and to Native Americans for stolen land and other issues.^{vii} **Reparations have never been paid to ADOS as a community.**



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C. A Federal Lineage-Based Reparations Program Is Necessary, Must Include a Federal Office of ADOS Affairs. State Reparations Program(s) Should Support Implementation of a Federal Reparations Program

A federal lineage-based reparations program and package is necessary to repair the multi-generational structural racism and pillage rooted in enslavement and its 200+ year residue lived and experienced by ADOS. We estimate the federal government owes ADOS a minimum of **20 trillion dollars**.^{viii} State governments do not have the budget to absorb this cost but can support ADOS by pushing for a comprehensive federal program and package that includes, but is not limited to, multi-generational cash disbursements for an indefinite time period, implementation of a Federal Office of ADOS Affairs and State Commissions on ADOS Affairs, and State Reparations Commissions for the limited purposes of data disaggregation within the Black/African American racial category and mandated reporting by State and County agencies. A well-resourced reparations program can close the lineage wealth gap and decrease the economic, social, and health disparities uniquely lived, experienced, and inherited by ADOS that has cemented us as a bottom-caste in the country our Ancestors built.

For these reasons, we urge this Committee to give a favorable report with amendments.

ⁱ <https://www.adosfoundation.org/mission-statement/>

ⁱⁱ See Meriam Webster Dictionary. Last accessed February 9, 2024. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reparation#:~:text=reparation-,noun,for%20a%20wrong%20or%20injury>).

ⁱⁱⁱ Little, Becky. *The Massive, Overlooked Role of Female Slave Owners*. The History Channel. March 12, 2019. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://www.history.com/news/white-women-slaveowners-they-were-her-property>).

^{iv} *District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act*. April 16, 1862. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/civil_war/DCEmanicipationAct_FeaturedDoc.htm#:~:text=On%20April%2016%2C%201862%2C%20the,to%20%24300%20for%20each%20freeperson.); Craemer, Thomas. *There Was a Time Reparations Were Actually Paid Out – Just Not to Formerly Enslaved People*. University of Connecticut – *UConn Today*. March 5, 2021. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://today.uconn.edu/2021/03/there-was-a-time-reparations-were-actually-paid-out-just-not-to-formerly-enslaved-people/#>)



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^v See Pub. Law 100-383 – Civil Liberties Act of 1988. National Archives. Last accessed February 9, 2024. (<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation#background>); Britannica Encyclopedia. Last accessed February 9, 2024. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reparation#:~:text=reparation-noun,for%20a%20wrong%20or%20injury>).

^{vi} U.S. Department of State. *The JUST Act Report: Germany*. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/germany/>); Debbie Wasserman Schultz. *Obama Administration Awards \$12M for Assistance to Holocaust Survivors*. October 1, 2015. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://wassermanschultz.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=306>); New York State – Financial Services. *Governor Hochul Announces Holocaust Victims Claim Processing Office Secured Over \$183 Million for Victims and Beneficiaries*. January 29, 2024. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-holocaust-claims-processing-office-secured-over-183-million-victims#:~:text=Governor%20Kathy%20Hochul%20today%20announced,heirs%20for%20bank%2C%20insurance%2C%20and>).

^{vii} The History Channel. *The Thorny History of Reparations in the United States*. Last accessed February 11, 2024. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-holocaust-claims-processing-office-secured-over-183-million-victims#:~:text=Governor%20Kathy%20Hochul%20today%20announced,heirs%20for%20bank%2C%20insurance%2C%20and>).

^{viii} See Endnote iv; Craemer, Thomas. (<https://today.uconn.edu/2021/03/there-was-a-time-reparations-were-actually-paid-out-just-not-to-formerly-enslaved-people/#>)