

Testimony Against HB0851

Please vote against HB0851.

This bill is nothing more than legalized stealing from one group who had nothing to do with slavery and give it to a group who was never enslaved.

There is an old adage that two wrongs do not make a right. While slavery was wrong, using tax money from Maryland residents, many of whom have not committed slavery nor had descendants that owned slaves, to pay descendants of slaves is legalized stealing and thus morally wrong.

In theory, reparations are paid to those who have been physically or economically injured by some criminal or legal, but immoral government action. This bill does not require Maryland residents claiming reparations to provide evidence as to how they were harmed because one or more of their ancestors were enslaved in Maryland. One could have ancestors who were enslaved, yet be considered wealthy and receive reparations under this bill.

Another disturbing feature of this bill is that the Commission gets to determine how much money each applicant should receive and the Governor must fund it. The Assembly, who represents the will of the people, would have no say whether this amount is too much, or even not enough. Moreover, the Assembly would then have to raise taxes or cut services to be able to afford this added expense as the State faces increasing structural deficits.

This bill would also create “winners” and “losers” in the African-American community; those who had enslaved ancestors in Maryland, not just any enslaved ancestors, and those who had no enslaved ancestors. Some of the “winners” would receive reparations despite not having any financial difficulties while some of the “losers” would not receive any reparations despite living in poverty.

There must be a better way to help those in the African-American community with financial difficulties without resorting to a reparations approach.

Please vote against HB0851

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