

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORT
2024 Legislative Session

Reference No.:	CR-005-2024
Draft No.:	1
Committee:	Health, Human Services, and Public Safety Committee
Date:	03/21/2024
Action:	FAV

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable: 5 - 0 (In favor, Council Members Fisher, Hawkins, Blegay, Olson, and Watson)

The Health, Human Services, and Public Safety Committee convened on March 21, 2024, to consider CR-005-2024.

CR-005-2024 expresses support and encouragement for establishing a commission to offer reparations to African American descendants of formerly enslaved individuals in the state. It calls upon the General Assembly to create the Maryland Representations Commission in honor of Harriet Tubman and urges establishing this commission during the 2024 legislative session.

Chair Fisher, the sponsor, provided statistical data concerning African Americans in the county. This included figures on the African American population in the county, average income in comparison to white residents of Prince George's County, and the county's historical connections to slavery and specific plantations. Recognizing the historical backdrop of slavery in Prince George's County is crucial, as it helps us understand the foundation upon which we stand. Advocating to establish the Maryland Representatives Commission by the General Assembly reflects a dedication to justice and acknowledging historical guidance. The Council calls upon the General Assembly to establish the Maryland Representatives Commission in the 2024 legislative session.

On behalf of the County Executive, Sakinda Skinner, County Council Liaison, expressed support for CR-005-2024.

Public testimony was heard from Delegate Aletheia McCaskill, Baltimore County, District 44-B, supporting CR-005-2024 on behalf of the Legislative Black Caucus. Delegate McCaskill indicates that it is essential to be cohesive and to be on one accord when it comes to reparations because things that have happened to the African American community affect us all, no matter what color or race we are. Delegate McCaskill indicated that she looks forward to meeting the stakeholders and modifying the legislation for the state session 2025. She hopes the Maryland General Assembly will be as supportive as the Council.

Additionally, Reverend Kobi Little, President of the Maryland NAACP, addressed the Council, expressing gratitude for their support in endorsing legislation to establish a reparations commission in Maryland. He emphasized that reparations are about healing and repairing historical injustices done to African Americans, advocating for unity and action to address these issues comprehensively. The council passing this resolution is essential in building momentum to advance reparations in Maryland. Grateful sentiments were also expressed to Chair Fisher for her continued support and dedication to reparations.

Linda Thornton Thomas, President of NAACP, Prince George's County Branch, provided thoughts and perspective on behalf of the Prince George's County NAACP. The NAACP's goal is to extend this effort beyond the county's borders and ensure widespread adoption. It aims to explore avenues for providing reparations, whether it's housing opportunities, education, or business ownership. Collaborating with organizations like the NAACP to make meaningful progress and advocate for change at both local and state levels is essential.

Josephine Mourning, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference – Dr. Martin Luther King's Foundation, spoke in support of CR-005-2024 on behalf of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, indicating that it has been long overdue for the descendants of African Americans who were severely impacted by the chattel slavery. The NAACP's support for the Reparations Commission is rooted in recognizing historical injustices and the need for economic empowerment and business opportunities for African Americans. Ms. Mourning emphasized the

importance of setting a precedent for other states to follow and expressed gratitude to the council members for their support.

Nicole Bruno, a Prince George's County resident for 12 years, spoke in favor of establishing a commission on reparations. Ms. Bruno, of Caucasian nationality acknowledged potential opposition to the commission. However, she emphasized the importance of creating an environment conducive to exploration and creativity and envisioning a fairer and more liberated future. She referenced Trisha Hershey's perspective on the power of imagination in liberation struggles and called for collective responsibility and solidarity in pursuing reparation. Ms. Bruno expressed gratitude for the opportunity to advocate for this cause and encouraged the council to consider establishing the commission.

The Health, Human Services and Public Safety Committee voted favorably, 5–0 on CR-005-2024.