

March 1, 2023

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB776

Senators Manning Jr., Thatcher, Gorsek, Linthicum, and Woods,

I write today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 776. As a social scientist and a paramedic, I see first-hand some of the impacts that racism has on people of color, and particularly on Black individuals and communities.

We know many things – we know that this is a direct result of slavery, decades of Jim Crow laws, and the current era of aversive racism. Aversive racism is characterized by a desire to wish that racism is gone, or that the impact of overt racism (past and present) is resolved. But scientists like myself know that this is not true. The experiences of Black and Brown people tell us that this is not true.

We also have an obligation to do something about it. While we might not have sought out the situation we are in, we can, and therefore we must, take action to begin the process of repairing and making amends. We do this consistently, without question, when other injustice occurs, but we struggle to take accountability for this because it is shameful, and because to do so requires that we acknowledge the ways in which white individuals like myself have benefited for generations.

There will be denial, anger, and bargaining, just as we see in the normal stages of grief as those who benefit from racism must come to terms with their relationship to our culture of racism. And, as with the stages of grieving, these stages must be experienced in order to emerge at acceptance and healing.

We could continue to delay this process and continue the harm, or we can support Senate Bill 776 and start to take action that should have happened long ago.

Thank you,

Jamie Kennel, PhD