



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: David A. Lorenzo-Botello, Legislative Correspondent
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #MarylandMyMaryland

AGENDA ITEM #2K
July 28, 2020
Action

SUBJECT

Resolution urging Maryland State lawmakers to change “Maryland, My Maryland” as the state song and to urge against the song from being played at official Montgomery County events.

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Final action – vote expected

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Our state’s rich and storied history is also plagued by slavery and sympathy towards the Confederacy and secessionist movement. The Pratt Street Riots that occurred in Baltimore in 1861 was a bloody confrontation between Union Troops headed to Washington D.C. and confederate sympathizers. James Randall Ryder, to express his opposition towards Union troops, wrote “Maryland, My Maryland” which became widely popular among Confederate America and was later made the state song in 1939 when Maryland was a segregated Jim Crow state.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Maryland State song was written in opposition to the events that occurred in Baltimore in 1861 involving Union troops and became widely popular among Confederate America

This report contains:

Maryland State Song Resolution

Pages 1-2

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: To Urge the State of Maryland to Repeal and Replace the State Song “Maryland, My Maryland” and to urge against the song from being played at public events in Montgomery County.

Background

1. The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a police officer has provoked protests and demonstrations throughout our Montgomery County and across our nation. Protestors are putting their own lives at risk to make their voices heard on the topic of racial equity and social justice. As a result, many Confederate symbols and statues are being dismantled or laid to rest.
2. By 1755, approximately one-third of Maryland’s population was enslaved, and while Maryland lawmakers ended the state’s participation in the transatlantic slave trade in 1774 and abolished slavery in 1864, the damaging effects would continue to be felt by the people and governing structures.
3. Maryland was one of the 13 original colonies and joined the union on April 28, 1788, by ratifying the Constitution of the United States. Maryland is now home to over six million residents with nearly to two million African Americans residing throughout its 24 jurisdictions.
4. Many of our residents identify the Maryland State song “Maryland, My Maryland” as a symbol of the Confederacy, an unrecognized republic formed by seven slave-holding states that based their economy on the institution of slavery. The lyrics of the song are from a nine-stanza poem written in 1861 by Confederacy-supporter James Ryder Randall (1829 – 1908) and set to the melody of “Lauriger Horatius.” The words call for Marylanders to fight against the U.S. and was used across the Confederacy as a battle hymn.
5. Maryland, My Maryland” includes lyrics that refer to President [Abraham Lincoln](#) as "the tyrant", "the despot", and "the Vandal", and to the Union as "Northern scum", as well as referring to the phrase "[Sic semper tyrannis](#)", which was the slogan later shouted by Marylander [John Wilkes Booth](#) when he [assassinated Lincoln](#). According to Randall, the poem was a plea to his home state of Maryland to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy.

6. The Maryland State's General Assembly adopted "Maryland, My Maryland" as the Maryland State song on April 29, 1939. Since that time, there have been many unsuccessful efforts by the Maryland General Assembly to revise the lyrics to the song or to repeal or replace the song altogether, namely, in 1974, 1980, 1984, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2016, 2018, and 2019.
7. Most recently, a bill was filed in the House of Delegates for the 2020 session to appoint an advisory panel to review public submissions and suggestions for a new State song, but the bill did not advance past the hearing stage because the General Assembly adjourned early due to state restrictions posed by the coronavirus.
8. No Marylander should have to sing, or listen to, a state song praising the forces that fought to preserve slavery, regardless of whether they know or understand the song's meaning or history.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

The Council urges the Maryland General Assembly to use its powers under the Maryland State Constitution to remove and replace "Maryland, My Maryland" as the state song; and until that time, urge against "Maryland, My Maryland" from being performed at official Montgomery County sponsored events, including public school events and graduations.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq., Clerk of the Council