Dear House leadership,

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.'”

-Genesis 4:10 NRSV

We — the undersigned faith-based organizations, faith leaders, and advocates representing millions of people of faith across the country — strongly urge you to support the passage of H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act.

H.R. 40 would establish a commission to examine the history of enslavement and discrimination in the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. During the 116th Congress, H.R. 40 had over 173 co-sponsors, and was endorsed by over 300 organizations across the country as part of the “Why We Can’t Wait” project. This overwhelming support demonstrates that the United States cannot move forward without properly addressing and atoning for the lasting harms of the nation's original sin — the institution of slavery.

There can be no racial healing in the United States without first repairing the harm caused by the deprivation and destruction of Black wealth, racism in health care, discrimination in the criminal legal system, and countless systemic failures. H.R. 40 is the only bill that will lead to concrete proposals for repairing the damage that the US government has inflicted on Black people. Anything short of this will fail to deliver the remedy required from centuries of injustice.

Examining the impacts of past policies and providing reparations to impacted communities is a common governmental practice. In 1946, Congress created the Indian Claims Commission to pay compensation to any federally recognized tribe for land that had been seized by the United States. Similarly, in 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, to study the wrongful internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. This led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which issued a formal apology and provided compensation to survivors of internment and their families.

The government has never issued a comprehensive study of the lasting impact of enslavement and the resulting racist policies, institutions, and systems in this country. In 2020 alone, we have seen pivotal examples of the detrimental impact of our country’s long history of systemic issues on the Black community. It is vital that Congress pass H.R. 40 as a first step that will chronicle the centuries of injustice against the Black community and offer remedies to redress and repair the legacy of anti-Black racism in this country.
The right to reparations is well-defined in international human rights law. Reparations seek to address the harms caused by human rights violations. They can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered, which helps overcome some of the consequences of the abuse. H.R. 40 is an essential step toward making reparations a reality in the United States by publicly acknowledging the government’s failings and setting a course for rectifying them.

As people of faith, we are calling on you to pass H.R. 40 because God calls us to repair wrongs done to one another and to work for personal and social reconciliation and renewal. We believe we are duly bound to follow a spiritual call to honor and protect the inherent sacred worth and dignity of all people and seek justice when that worth and dignity is violated. We have an opportunity and an obligation to swiftly pass H.R. 40 as a first step in redressing centuries of injustice against Black people in the United States. H.R. 40 has been described as the ONLY present possibility in adequately addressing and redressing these historic injustices.

As our nation works to heal from COVID-19, we must also have a national reckoning with our legacy of enslavement and systemic racism. Until the United States acknowledges the systemic failings that we have allowed to persist and offer Black people redress for these harms, there will be no healing in our nation. Reparations is a matter of Justice, and the time is now to act by passing H.R. 40.

Signed,

**National Organizations**

African American Ministers In Action  
Alliance of Baptists  
American Friends Service Committee  
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)  
Bread for the World  
Center for Common Ground  
Church World Service  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Faith in Public Life Action  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Keshet  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Missionary Oblates
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance of Faith and Justice
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi USA
Poligon Education Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
SBC21
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Leadership
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Episcopal Church
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
National Alliance of Faith and Justice

**State Organizations**
Faith Action Network of Washington State
Faith in Florida
Faith in Indiana
Faith in New Jersey
First United Methodist Church, Dallas
MAPS-AMEN (American Muslim Empowerment Network)
Missouri Faith Voices
NH Conference United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group
North Carolina Council of Churches
Soul 2 Soul Sisters
SouthEast Faith Leaders Network
United Methodist Women

**Local Organizations**

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS)  
Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship  
Braxton Institute  
Concord District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (Piedmont Episcopal District)  
Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries  
DC Dorothy Day Catholic Worker  
Ebenezer Church PHX  
IKAR  
Lab/Shul  
Little River United Church of Christ  
Olympia Zen Center—A Buddhist Community  
One Fellowship UMC  
Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO)  
Peace and Justice Ministry, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Edgewood, WA  
Princeton Mutual Aid  
Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Center  
St. Luke Community United Methodist Church  
The Gathering, A Womanist Church in Dallas  
The VGC Group  
Together Colorado  
Trenton Anti-Violence Coalition  
Unidos of Snohomish County  
Wesley United Methodist Church

**Individuals**

A. Connie Ruhl  
Akilah S. Wallace  
Alice Woldt, former co-director Faith Action Network  
Amy Compestine  
Andrew Drom  
Angie Whitehurst  
Bettie J. Durrah
Bob Norton
Cantor Darcie N. Sharlein
Cantor Risa Wallach
Carmela McKeller
Christian Brooks, Co-Chair of the Domestic Human Needs Racial Equity Group
Christian S. Watkins
Carol Larkin
Carolyn Morse-Finn
Cynthia Griffiths
Daryl Denning
David S. Raymond
Denise Lytle
Dorothy P. Wonder
Dr. Craig C. Hill
Eleanor van Noppen
Eli McCarthy, Ph.D., Professor of Justice and Peace Studies, Georgetown University
ElizaBeth Emery
Eugenia Allen-Schmid, Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
Gery Gerst
Jackie Thiry
Jacques Price
James Wilson Roberts
Jean Johnson
Jesse A. Kleinman
Joan H Nelson
Joanne Gillen Cortese
Judy LeBlanc
Kristin Barber
Laura McHenry
Laura R. Norton
Laurie Bomstad Heck
Lindsley Rice
Lois J. Holmes
Lori Kershner
M. Christina Perez
Marcia A. Daley
Margaret Snell
Mariah Mitchell
Marie Dennis
Mark Meeks
Mark Teagle, Wesley United Methodist Church, San Jose, CA
Mary L Butts
Mary Rupert
Mary Stamp
Maya Aronoff
Melani Baker
Melissa Battah
Meredith Dodson, Co-Chair of the Domestic Human Needs Racial Equity Group
Michael Betz
Mickey M Beary
Nancy C. Reyes
Nancy Horman
Odessa H. Huff
Pastor Trena Turner
Patricia Kelly
Paul Benz
Paul Sherman
Pine Bluff-Wilmot District Missionary President
Rabbi Sharon Brous, IKAR
Raymond Meester
Renee Felton Pullen
Rev. Barbara J Gilday
Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould
Rev. Dr. David M. Hindman
Rev. Dr. Jerry L. Folk
Rev. Andrea Clark Chambers, Antioch Baptist Church, Tulsa, OK
Rev. Ann Barton
Rev. Aundreia Alexander, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Rev. Carol P. Dague
Rev. Cynthia Lapp, Mt Rainier, MD
Rev. Denise Thompson
Rev. Dr. Christopher J. Ross
Rev. Dr. Stacey Cole Wilson, BWCUMC
Rev. Ebony Grisom
Rev. Jeffrey Dodson
Rev. Katy Lloyd
Rev. Kristin-Luana Baumann, ELCA
Rev. Laura Robinson
Rev. Lee Hartman, Snoqualmie UMC
Rev. Mary Gear
Rev. Meredith A. Allen
Rev. Monica Styron, Vice Moderator Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery
Rev. Elice Higginbotham, United Church of Christ
Rev. Winston C. Gould
Roberta & Ray Olson
Robin Tiggs
Roger C Johnson PhD
Sammy Chavin
Samuel Levi Christensen
Sister Aneelah Afzali, Esq.
Sister Quincy Howard, OP
Stephanie Rubanowice
Terri L Echegoyen
Terry Avila
Tina Y. Washington
Vanessa Clayton
Victoria Strang, Policy Advocate with Faith Communities at Human Rights Watch