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| Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth—Subcommittee on Research and Analysis |
| June 16, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. |
| General Assembly Building, House Room C-206 |
| <https://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/studies/720> |
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The Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth (the Commission)—Subcommittee on Research and Analysis (the Subcommittee) met in Richmond with Delegate Jeion A. Ward, chair, presiding.[[1]](#footnote-1) The meeting began with the chair's introduction, which was followed by a presentation and member discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the[Subcommittee's meetings webpage](https://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/meetings/2145)[.](https://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/meetings/1883)Video recording of the meeting is available[*here*](https://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00304/harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20250618/-1/20950?startposition=20250616100452&mediaEndTime=20250616112038&viewMode=2&globalStreamId=4).

Presentation: Summary of Responses from Public Institutions of Higher Education

Trevor Merrion, Senior Associate, Division of Legislative Services

Mr. Merrion described the inquiry that Delegate Delores L. McQuinn, chair of the Commission, sent to public institutions of higher education. He then reviewed the institutions' responses, grouping them into three primary categories by the degree to which each institution had acquired property through eminent domain or in majority-Black neighborhoods and noting the salient points regarding each institution's property acquisitions and community engagement. Finally, Mr. Merrion reviewed the Subcommittee's charge from the full Commission, which includes reviewing the survey responses, developing follow-up queries and a plan for additional research, and presenting findings and recommendations to the full Commission.

The members sought clarification in instances where purchases of white-owned homes may have contributed to the displacement of black communities and underscored the need for more data and contextual information regarding the impact of displacement on people's lives. Mr. Merrion suggested that further research or follow-up queries would be beneficial to develop a more in-depth understanding of the issue.

Members noted the role of The College of William & Mary in Virginia (W&M) in the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg and suggested that the impact of this initiative on local majority-Black communities should be further examined.

Dr. Byron Cherry, member of the full Commission, shared that he spoke with the administration at Norfolk State University (NSU) and reported that NSU was not aware of any purchases through eminent domain and that the administration would be providing its formal response soon.

Members discussed grouping the institutions by priority into Tier 1, which would include Christopher Newport University, W&M, Old Dominion University, Longwood University, the Virginia Community College System, and the University of Virginia; Tier 2, which would include Radford University, Virginia State University, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), and Virginia Military Institute; and Tier 3, which would include Norfolk State University, George Mason University, James Madison University, the University of Mary Washington, and the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

Member Discussion

Delegate Bonita G. Anthony provided a proposed expansion of the Subcommittee's charge (available [here](https://studiesvirginiageneralassembly.s3.amazonaws.com/meeting_docs/documents/000/002/699/original/Proposed_Charge_Expansion_Research_Subcommittee.pdf?1750083594)). Members reviewed the Commission's available funds and suggested developing requests for proposals for a project manager and potentially other experts.

Members noted that the project manager should inform the work of the Commission and acquire more data and contextual information to provide a full scope of the issue. They spoke to the importance of involving an economist who could assess the lost generational wealth of displaced communities, as well as the disparity in home value assessments for white and Black owners relinquishing homes through eminent domain proceedings. Experts in eminent domain and racial equity law and equity planning and human displacement modeling were also considered.

Members proposed reaching out to the Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism and other entities to learn more about their research process and to help determine what expertise may be needed.

Members stressed the importance of documenting the work of the Commission and promoting transparency, emphasizing that regular reporting and online access to Commission materials should be a responsibility of the project manager.

Members discussed how this investigation would ultimately extend beyond public institutions of higher education to other entities and institutions that worked in collaboration with the universities.

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| For more information, see the [Commission's website](https://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/studies/720) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:Lily Jones, Legislative Projects Manager, DLSljones@dls.virginia.gov804-698-1888Trevor Merrion, Senior Associate, DLStmerrion@dls.virginia.gov804-698-1851 |

1. **Members Present:** Delegate Jeion A. Ward (chair), Delegate Bonita G. Anthony, Delegate Karen Keys-Gamarra, Alyson Buckner (designee for Secretary Aimee Rogstad Guidera), Dr. Cassandra L. Newby-Alexander

 **Members Absent:** Dr. Julian Maxwell Hayter [↑](#footnote-ref-1)