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May, 2024

Dear Members of Virginia Congressional Delegation,

As Bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, comprised of over 62,000 members and 576 clergy, we are deeply committed to racial justice and building Beloved community. We urge you to support the designation of Indigenous Peoples' Day as a legal holiday in place of Columbus Day and, in doing so, support House Bill 5822 and Senate Bill 2970 introduced in the 118th US Congress.

Our Diocese, organized in 1785, consists of 174 congregations, six schools, and two diocesan retreat centers across 38 counties and several cities in central, northern, and northwestern Virginia. Our mission aligns with the values of unity, diversity, and service to Christ and the world.

Central to our work in racial justice and healing is the practice of truth-telling. Designating Indigenous Peoples' Day is a vital step towards acknowledging the painful, often suppressed history of this nation, while honoring the vast cultural contributions of its original inhabitants.

This change serves several crucial purposes:

Respecting Indigenous Heritage: Acknowledges those who lived on this land long before European colonization.

Celebrating Resilience: Recognizes the strength and enduring spirit of Indigenous peoples and their nations.

Fostering Education: Creates crucial opportunities to educate the public about Indigenous histories, cultures, and continued presence within our communities.

Confronting Historical Injustice: Begins to address the legacy of violence and oppression suffered by Indigenous communities.

We believe that supporting Indigenous Peoples' Day allows our nation to tell a more truthful narrative of our American story. It represents an act of reconciliation and a commitment to building a future rooted in justice and repairing the breach.

We urge your support of US House Bill 5822 and US Senate Bill 2970.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. E. Mark Stevenson
Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Gayle Elizabeth Harris
Assistant Bishop