



EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
of Southern Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes
Bishop

11832 Rock Landing Drive, Suite 100
Newport News, VA 23606-4231

757-423-8287

800-582-8292

Fax: 757-595-0783

bishop@diosova.org

July 17, 2024

Dear Members of Virginia Congressional Delegation,

I write to you as the bishop of a vibrant truth seeking diocese to urge you to support the designation of Indigenous People's Day as a legal holiday in lieu of Columbus Day and the endorsement of US House Bill 5822 and US Senate Bill 2970.

The Diocese of Southern Virginia stretches more than three hundred miles from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the Dan River and from the south side of the James River at Richmond to the North Carolina border. We are a vibrant community of one hundred churches comprised of twenty thousand members and 186 clergy who are committed to equality, racial justice, reconciliation, and possibility. We acknowledge the native peoples who are the original custodians of the land we call the Diocese of Southern Virginia, including the Indigenous Algonquin, Siouan and Iroquoian speaking peoples encompassing at least twenty-two distinct tribes.

Truth telling is critical to moving forward in reconciling our history. We know that the colonists and the church profited through acts of colonization that resulted in genocide, ethnic cleansing, stolen land, and forced removal of Indigenous people. This change in the designation of Indigenous People's Day is a key step in acknowledging the fact that vibrant cultures and civilizations existed on this continent prior to Columbus' arrival.

On behalf of the clergy and lay people of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, I urge you to support the designation of Indigenous People's Day as a legal holiday in lieu of Columbus Day as well as the endorsement of US House Bill 5822 and US Senate Bill 2970.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes
XI Bishop, Southern Virginia