

March 9, 2025

To: Charles County Commissioners,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a lifelong Charles County resident, a Piscataway Conoy tribal citizen, and a nonprofit leader dedicated to cultural and environmental preservation, I write to express my unwavering support for the donation of land at 16816 Country Lane in Waldorf, Maryland, known as the Waldorf Nike Battery (Nike Site), for the establishment of the Piscataway Conoy Cultural Center and Museum.

This land is more than just a parcel of property—it is an integral part of our community's story. I grew up on these lands, learned my cultural traditions here, and carry with me the memories of ceremonies, gatherings, and teachings passed down through generations. For many decades, this land has been a space where the Piscataway people have come together, where we have shared our heritage, and where we have continued the legacy of our ancestors.

The donation of this land to the Piscataway Conoy Tribe under the leadership of Chairman Francis Gray and the elected Tribal Council is a long-overdue step toward honoring the history, resilience, and rightful place of the original people of Southern Maryland. This land has already served as a vital space for public cultural heritage events and a tribal resource hub and placing it in the hands of the Piscataway Conoy ensures that it remains a beacon of learning, connection, and identity for generations to come.

Beyond its significance to the tribal community, the Piscataway Conoy Cultural Center and Museum will provide immeasurable benefits to all residents of Charles County and beyond. It will offer educational programs, support heritage tourism, and foster meaningful collaboration between the tribal nation and surrounding communities. It is a chance for Maryland to take a step forward in recognizing and preserving the contributions of the Indigenous people who have shaped this region.

As someone who has dedicated my career to advancing cultural and historical preservation, I urge you to support this meaningful and necessary act. By doing so, you are not only honoring the history of the Piscataway Conoy people but also investing in the future of Southern Maryland as a place where history, culture, and community thrive together.

I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to the positive impact this decision will bring.

Sincerely,

Anjela Barnes
Accokeek Foundation, Executive Director
Charles County Resident, Piscataway Conoy Tribal Citizen
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Photos of my grandparents (Ellen and Oliver Gray, Sr.) and great-aunt (Isabel Harley) over the decades providing cultural education at the Waldorf Nike site/Piscataway Cultural Center.

