**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BYM PEACE & SOC.CONCERNS COM.:**

1) BYM's Peace & Social Concerns Committee this spring again will offer BYM Networking Day--with in-person and Zoom hybrid options.  This year's event will take place on Saturday, 4/15/23, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, with the in-person gathering at Friends Meeting of Washington.

 Since Networking Day will take place only 3 weeks from now, ***Friends are asked to  register as soon as possible*** to participate either in-person (first-come, first-served for the first 20 people) or virtually by Zoom!:

--For the link to pre-register for ***virtual, Zoom*** participation, you may click [**here**](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcud-CgpjguHdUUyCBAmeIx2IfPFsn6b421).)

--In-person registration also is amazingly easy -- just send email to [pcaroom@gmail.com](mailto:pcaroom@gmail.com) (NOT reply all), telling us your name, your Monthly Meeting, and which two workshops you'd like to attend.

Features of this Networking Day will include:

-*Plenary talk about "Intergenerational Peace-Building" by Lauren Brownlee, FCNL Assoc.Gen.Sec.*

*-4 workshop options will be offered:*

*(MORNING) Reproductive Justice,  OR Peace Testimony,*

*(AFTERNOON) Climate Change, OR Restorative Justice for racism*

*-Lunch presentations on a young Friends' engagement with end-of-life choices*

*-Sharing between Friends from different Monthly Meetings on our local initiatives*

*-Continental breakfast and vegan lunch (Donation optional.)*

2) Quaker Voice of Maryland is busy in its 3rd year of assisting Md. Friends to act in support of our values. This year’s three priority areas include: climate change, criminal justice & civil rights.  It’s not too late to receive updates by signing up at <https://www.quakervoicemd.org/get-involved/join-our-contacts> .



March 12, 2023

Dear Chairman Senator Feldman, Vice Chairman Senator Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

**Quaker Voice of Maryland is submitting this testimony in FAVOR of SB0878 – *Voting Rights Act of 2023 - Counties and Municipalities.***

We have identified this bill as one of our priorities for the 2023 general assembly because Quakers across Maryland have shared their concern about voting access and protection. One of the testimonies of Quakerism is equality and we see the Maryland Voting Rights Act as striving to support equality in participation to the state political process.

This is because the “Maryland Voting Rights Act will provide a means of ensuring that all voters are able to cast a meaningful ballot, but it will especially help to accelerate the participation of voters of color who have been historically denied an equal opportunity to participate in the political process” (ACLU Fact Sheet, link provided below). Some highlights of this bill for us include:

* Creating strong protections against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.
* Launching a “preclearance” program that requires places with records of discrimination to prove that proposed voting changes will not harm voters of color before they can go into effect.
* Providing new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules and election systems in court.

In addition to submitting hearing testimony in support of this bill we have signed on to a letter being organized by Common Cause Maryland and have joined over 20 organizations to urge SUPPORT for this bill.

To learn more about the issue and how passing this legislation will lead to positive change for Marylanders who have historically been denied an equal opportunity to participate in the political process I recommend you read the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-MD) bill fact sheet: <https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/votingrights_onepager_mdga23.pdf>

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this essential legislation.

Sincerely*,*

Molly Finch

*Working Group Member, on behalf of Quaker Voice of Maryland*

*Personal email:* [*mgsfinch@gmail.com*](mailto:mgsfinch@gmail.com)

*Organization email:* [*quakervoicemd@gmail.com*](mailto:quakervoicemd@gmail.com)

--------------------------------

**3) The BYM P & SC Reproductive Justice Working Group** reminds Friends of the following request from the Friends Committee on National Legislation and encourages Friends to respond.

**Request for Discernment Regarding Reproductive Health and Abortion**

On behalf of the General Committee, the Policy Committee is seeking the help of Friends in discerning what FCNL should say about reproductive health care in its policy statement.

[**https://www.fcnl.org/about/world-we-seek/legislative-priorities/request-discernment-regarding-reproductive-health-and-abortion**](https://www.fcnl.org/about/world-we-seek/legislative-priorities/request-discernment-regarding-reproductive-health-and-abortion)

In addition to the three BYM minutes from 1979, some BYM Monthly Meetings have approved additional minutes since the Dobbs decision.  We are aware of minutes from Adelphi, Bethesda, and Friends Meeting of Washington.  Herndon Friends are  holding a Gathering for Listening to consider Reproductive Justice.   Please let us know if your Monthly Meeting has approved a minute or are considering additional work on discernment.

We encourage Friends to participate in the informational and experiential Reproductive Justice Workshop, offered as part of the BYM P & SC Networking Day on Saturday April 15, 2023 at Friends Meeting of Washington (also as a hybrid offering). 

Sharon Stout, Co-clerk, BYM P & SC RJWG, Adelphi, she/her, [SKStout@gmail.com](mailto:SKStout@gmail.com) , 240-461-8374 (cell, please text or leave message)

-------------------------------

**4) Working Group on Militarism under the care of Peace and Social Concerns Committee**

**Report to March 25, 2023 BYM Interim Meeting at Friends Meeting Washington**

Our Working Group on Militarism, under the care of BYM Peace and Social Concerns Committee, is committed to discouraging U.S. military confrontations, reducing the threat of nuclear war, fostering peaceful resolutions of conflict and addressing the damage to persons and nations brought about by U.S. military confrontations .

We meet once a month by Zoom and share ideas and support for anti-war projects that our members are pursuing. Through congressional visits, presentations to our Monthly Meetings, public demonstrations, and newspaper editorials we educate about the on-going dangers of nuclear weapons.

Our efforts toward a more peaceful world include seeking endorsement from our Monthly Meetings and local government of “Back From the Brink,” a resolution which mandates five U.S. actions: elimination of nuclear arsenals, removal of the first-strike option, ending the U.S. President's authority to launch a nuclear attack, taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert and canceling the plan for expensive “enhanced weaponry.” ([https://preventnuclearwar.org](https://preventnuclearwar.org/) )

We encourage our Monthly Meetings to pass a minute in support of the U.N. Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. ([www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw](http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw))

We seek to reduce military spending and end U.S. engagement in the Saudi War on Yemen.

We hope you will join us April 15th at the P&SC Networking Day, where the Working Group on Militarism will present a workshop on alternatives to war and actions you can take as an individual, a meeting or a community to prevent nuclear war and armed confrontation.

Finally, with delight we welcome the Golden Rule Peace Boat, which set sail in 1958 to stop nuclear atmospheric testing in the Marshall Islands, and is now navigating the inter-coastal waterway toward the Chesapeake Bay with ports of call throughout the BYM coastal region. It's mission: “A call for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful, sustainable future.” Look for BYM announcements of events that celebrate this historic ship and her crew while she docks with us during April and May this year.

In preparation for the arrival of this historic ship Friends are invited to take part in a discussion of Quaker skipper and author Albert Bigelow's book “The Golden Rule, an Experiment in Truth.” It is a compelling narrative about the Golden Rule's sail to the nuclear testing site, the crew's acquisition and preparation of the boat, and Bigelow's inner reflection, self questioning and moral discernment , leading to his decision to sail into the eye of the nuclear storm. Please contact Working Group member Stan Becker [sbecker2@jhu.edu](mailto:sbecker2@jhu.edu) for discussion dates and the Zoom link.