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## Approval sought for \$2.75M settlement in DOJ probe of Md. State Police

The Justice Department had been probing whether Maryland State Police's hiring and promotional practices discriminated against Black troopers.

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Maryland state officials are seeking approval of a \$2.75 million settlement to resolve a Justice Department investigation into the Maryland State Police over claims that Black troopers were harmed by the agency's discriminatory hiring practices.

The request, filed by the state police and the attorney general's office, was placed on the Maryland Board of Public Works' publicly available agenda Tuesday and will be considered at its meeting Oct. 2.

In the brief agenda item, state officials wrote that the \$2.75 million includes "monetary damages," which will be placed into a settlement account and ultimately awarded to those deemed eligible.

The payments are part of a settlement with the Justice Department, which [opened a pattern-or-practice investigation in July 2022](#) into whether the Maryland State Police's hiring and promotional practices violated federal law. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

A spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office in Maryland confirmed in a statement that federal officials have reached a settlement with the Maryland State Police but declined to comment further on the matter.

Elena Russo, a Maryland State Police spokeswoman, said: "As a result of the investigation that the U.S. Department of Justice opened in July 2022, the Maryland Department of State Police has undergone a rigorous and thorough evaluation of its hiring practices. Following careful consideration and negotiations, the Department looks forward to hearing the settlement matter before the Maryland Board of Public Works, and will provide additional comment pending settlement action on October 2."

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(The Washington Post)

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The federal investigation into the state police launched less than a year after former state lawmaker Erek Barron was appointed as [Maryland's first Black U.S. attorney](#). At the onset of the probe by his office and the Justice Department's civil rights division, Barron told The Washington Post that members of the Maryland General Assembly had heard complaints from Black troopers for years. The press release announcing the investigation did not detail specific allegations; the Justice Department often announces the results of its pattern-or-practice investigations when they are complete, alongside an agreement mandating reforms.

A few months after the Justice Department announced its inquiry, a group of state troopers [filed their own lawsuit](#) against the Maryland State Police in U.S. District Court in Maryland, accusing the agency of denying promotions for officers of color, imposing harsher penalties on them compared with White officers and allowing a work environment that subjected them to racist comments.

That case, nearly two years old, is ongoing. Earlier this month, a judge denied the state's attempt to dismiss the lawsuit.

"We plan to move forward aggressively at this stage and are very gratified at the court's decision," said Jay Holland, an attorney representing the troopers who filed the suit. "Our clients are ultimately seeking justice and a system that is fair."

Holland said the troopers want hiring, disciplinary and promotional practices that are not discriminatory — and an environment within the agency where employees can speak up about unfair treatment without fear of retaliation.

