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## **HB-906 General Provisions - Commemorative Days Pongal Day /January as Tamil Heritage Month**

**Position: Support**

**March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Committee Members,**

I am Rajaram Srinivasan, Past President of the Tamil Sangam of Greater Washington lives in North Potomac in Montgomery County and I support HB 906. I have been a Tamil American for the last 15 years and a proud Marylander for 15 years. It's with honor and privilege that I submit this testimony in support of HB 906 to Commemorate January 14<sup>th</sup> as Pongal day and January as Tamil Heritage Month in Maryland.

I am being the first generation US immigrant from the country of one of the longest surviving Classical language in the World called Tamil. Thai Pongal is our heritage a four-day-long harvest festival celebrated in all Tamilian living countries which falls in the month of January when crops like rice, sugarcane, turmeric etc. are harvested. Pongal festival is celebrated as a thanksgiving ceremony for the year's harvest. Pongal is one of the most important and most awaited festivals for the American Tamil Community. Pongal is an ancient festival but it is celebrated all around the world with excitement and zeal even today.

As a representative of large Tamil community in the DC Metro area, passing the Pongal day bill in the State of Maryland recognizes the cultural diversity in one of the great States to live and grow as a good citizen in the United States. It helps our community to follow the rich heritage and pass it on to the second generation kids who have born and rose in the US. It recognizes Tamil culture as part of the system in the State of Maryland which brings family bonding and community affection, Unity and prosperity. We as a minority community in the United States of America, such recognitions to value our Tamil culture and heritage make us to motivate and follow our tradition and share our values with American community.

We request that the Great State of Maryland, enriched by its cultural diversity, recognize this important harvest Tamil Festival of Pongal and the General Assembly designate January 14 and in each succeeding year, as Pongal Day in Maryland.

Vaalga (Long Live) Tamil! Long Live America!! Nandri, Vanakam (Thank you)

Rajaram Srinivasan, Past President, Tamil Sangam of Greater Washington Inc