



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 15, 2022

**Testimony in support of HB 0484  
General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Dashain Day**

Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

Dashain is a celebration of good triumphing over evil which originated in Nepal and is part of many national cultural identities, including India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. While the festivities usually last for up to two weeks, **House Bill 484** seeks to identify just one day, October 5, as Dashain Day in the state of Maryland. This will acknowledge and legitimize an important cultural practice of our South Asian communities, helping them feel at home in our state.

In recent years, the Nepali diaspora in the United States has grown, and Maryland is one of the main settling points for families immigrating from Nepal and nearby countries. According to the most recent American Community Survey, the Asian population of Maryland surpasses 375,000, with South Asians representing the largest proportion. These communities are growing, and immigration from South Asian countries will continue to rise in the coming years. I am grateful to the state for welcoming these communities.

Uprooting one's culture and making a home in a new country is not easy. There are many things we can do to bolster our social support for vulnerable people and communities which would help make it easier for them to get settled and integrate into American life. Recognizing Dashain Day would not solve these bigger problems, but it would send a clear message of welcome, support, and solidarity. While living as a minority in the United States has always had its challenges, a 150 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes and vitriol during the pandemic has forced this community to grapple with anxiety and fear. Both President Biden and Governor Hogan have condemned hate crimes against Asian-Americans, but we can go further. We can make a point to be proud of the beauty of our cultural blend. We can help good triumph over evil. It does not cost anything for the state.

Many of you know that I recently earned a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, studying the political and linguistic integration of Nepalese immigrant communities. Part of my research included a nationwide survey of these communities, and a clear majority of respondents indicated that they do not feel recognized, or that they have a voice in political and cultural discourse in this country. This reinforces a sense of separation and creates a loop that prevents these folks from integrating into American society. But believe me, these people are

paying attention. They will receive a clear message from the passage of this bill. They will see Dashain recognized by government agencies, businesses, schools, and other organizations, and they will understand that the State of Maryland has taken a stand to say that Dashain matters.

With all this in mind, I request a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Bhandari", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Honorable Delegate Harry Bhandari  
Maryland Legislative District 8