



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 15, 2023

**Testimony in support of HB 0967**  
**General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Dashain Day**

Chairwoman Penya-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

Dashain is a cultural festival originating in Nepal that celebrates the victory of good over evil. It is also celebrated in several other South Asian communities, including Indian Americans, Bhutanese Americans, and Bangladeshi Americans. The festival typically lasts up to two weeks, but House Bill 967 proposes recognizing only one day, October 5, as Dashain Day in Maryland. This acknowledgment of a critical cultural practice of the South Asian community will help them feel at home in our state.

Maryland has become a popular settling point for families immigrating from Nepal and neighboring countries, with South Asians representing the most significant proportion of the Asian population, which surpasses 475,000 in the state, according to the latest American Community Survey. These communities are growing, and South Asian immigration is expected to continue to rise in the coming years.

Uprooting one's culture and establishing a new home in a foreign country is challenging. We can take steps to provide social support for vulnerable people and communities to help them settle and integrate into American life. Recognizing Dashain Day will not solve these issues, but it will send a clear message of welcome, support, and solidarity to the South Asian community. The pandemic has intensified challenges for minority communities, including a 150% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes. Although President Biden has condemned these hate crimes, we can do more. Recognizing and celebrating the diversity of our cultural blend can help good triumph over evil. It will not cost anything for the state to do so.

My research on political participation and linguistic Integrations indicates that a clear majority of respondents from the South Asian community do not feel recognized or 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. Recognizing Dashain Day through the passage of this bill will send a clear message that Dashain matters and diversity matters.

Therefore, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 967.

Respectfully,

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

The Honorable Delegate Harry Bhandari  
Maryland Legislative District 8