



**Favorable Testimony
HB899 - General Provisions - Commemorative Months -
Muslim American Heritage and Jewish American Heritage Months**

**Rev. Lawrence E. Walker, Executive Director
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives**

April 03, 2025

Education, Energy, and the Environment

**The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair**

Favorable Testimony of Executive Director Lawrence E. Walker, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives(GOCI), Regarding HB899

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Rev. Larry Walker, I serve as the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI). Our office houses the state's ethnic and the cultural commissions which include representation from several different faiths. I am here today to offer favorable testimony regarding House Bill 899, which proposes the annual proclamation of January as Muslim American Heritage Month and May as Jewish American Heritage Month.

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives is dedicated to fostering inclusive communities and promoting mutual understanding across Maryland's diverse population. **We believe that recognizing and celebrating the rich cultural contributions of our faith communities including the Muslim and Jewish American communities is essential to building a stronger, more united state.**

HB899 aligns with the GOCI mission by,

- **Elevating Awareness, Promoting Education, Strengthening Community Bonds, and Reflecting Maryland's Diversity**

Our office understands that these designations are not simply symbolic. They represent a tangible commitment to acknowledging the lived experiences and enduring contributions of these vital communities within Maryland.

We believe that HB899 provides a valuable opportunity to promote cultural understanding, celebrate diversity, and strengthen the bonds that unite our state. **We urge the committee to give this bill a favorable report.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lawrence E. Walker Executive Director Governor's Office of Community Initiatives