

Testimony Supporting HB 899 to the State Senate
Establishing January as Muslim American Heritage Month and
May as Jewish American Heritage Month

Respectfully Submitted by

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

My name is Rabbi Susan Grossman.

While I am a Commissioner on the
Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern
American Affairs, I testify today as a private
citizen and Interfaith Leader to support HB
899, establishing January as Muslim
American Heritage Month and May as
Jewish American Heritage Month.

Ethnic Heritage Months inspire schools,
cultural institutions, and community
organizations to celebrate and learn more
about the different heritages of our citizens.
At a time when inclusion and diversity are
under siege, Heritage Months encourage and

strengthen a social fabric of understanding and mutual responsibility by improving our citizens' respect for each other and our myriad differences. Indeed, the tapestry of our diverse identities as Marylanders is one of the most precious things uniting us in a nation torn by derision and division.

Maryland already recognizes several Heritage Months by statute: Irish-American, Caribbean, Hispanic, German-American, and American Indian Heritage Months. There are also Black and Women's History Months.ⁱ

The Jewish and Muslim communities are two significant Maryland minorities missing from that list.

In 2024, Maryland's Jewish community experienced a shocking 211% increase in antisemitic incidents, according to ADL's Annual Audit. It was the seventh-highest spike of any Jewish community in the

nation.ⁱⁱ The ACLU reports that hate crimes against Muslims also rose last year, exacerbated by anti-immigrant sentiment.ⁱⁱⁱ The kind of education encouraged by Muslim and Jewish Heritage Months can combat such rising hate.

HB 899 has brought together the Jewish and Muslim communities to support its passage when international events have tested the alliance between our two communities. We stand united today to urge passage of this bill codifying the celebration of our Jewish and Muslim heritages. This gives me hope for a more cooperative future, strengthened by the opportunities offered by Jewish and Muslim Heritage Months, should this bill become law. Thank you for your attention, and I urge a favorable report.

ⁱ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/holidays.html>.

ⁱⁱ <https://dc.adl.org/news/adl-audit-finds-frightening-levels-of-antisemitic-incidents-in-maryland-virginia-and-the-district-of-columbia-in-2023/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.aclu.org/anti-muslim-discrimination>.