

Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ayesha Gulistan

Position: FAV

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

My name is Dr Ayesha Gulistan. I am a proud mom and wife, a doctor by day and a commissioner with Governor Wes Moore's Middle Eastern American Affairs commission. I'm so excited that Maryland will be passing a HB 899 bill that recognizes my Muslim community and provides an opportunity to showcase our rich culture and traditions. This will make Maryland a more inclusive state where all are welcomed. I'm very thankful to Delegate Sarah Wolek and team for all their hard work.

Warmly,
Dr Ayesha Gulistan

HB 899 Senate EEE -JCRC Commemorative Months - Mu

Uploaded by: deborah miller

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 899* –
*General Provisions – Commemorative Months – Muslim American
Heritage and Jewish American Heritage Months*
House Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 3, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout the region. The JCRC is committed to cultivating a society based on justice and mutual respect. We advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

House Bill 899 requires the Governor to designate May as Jewish American Heritage Month and January as Muslim American Heritage Month in recognition of these two communities' contributions to Maryland with appropriate ceremonies and activities. During May, the JCRC encourages its community to read Jewish books, make Jewish food, watch Jewish movies, and much more. Our Education Division also provides resources for educators to teach the wider community about Judaism, antisemitism, Jewish traditions and history.

May was first recognized Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) by the George W. Bush Administration nearly 20 years ago. The JCRC has been celebrating JAHM in Maryland for many years, and we are thrilled that HB 899 will codify this proclamation. It is not only an opportunity to acknowledge the 350-year history of Jewish contributions to America and the American culture, but also to educate diverse public audiences about Jewish culture and spark crucial conversations about the American Jewish past, present and future.

Intergroup work is critical to the JCRC's mission which is why recognize the importance of celebrating Muslim American Heritage Month as well in HB 899. We are the Jewish community's central voice for relationship building between Jews and other faith, ethnic, and minority groups in Maryland. We work in and assume a leading role in broad coalitions that foster greater mutual respect and strengthen the fabric of our local community. In times of celebration and times of need we work together to build a stronger more vibrant community. Our carefully nurtured relationships allow us to be present for all faith communities when needed. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB 899.

Testimony Supporting HB 0899.pdf

Uploaded by: Francis Ricciardone

Position: FAV

TO:

Brian J. Feldman, Chair

Cheryl C. Kagan, , Vice Chair Kagan, and

Distinguished Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SUBJECT: Recommendation in favor of HB 0899

DATE: April 1, 2025

Gentlepersons:

I urge you to request your Committee's favorable report on HB 0899, which would establish official Maryland State commemorative months in celebration of the rich cultural heritage of the Muslim and Jewish communities of our state. I write as a member of neither of those communities, but as a Marylander who has represented the United States abroad over a long career as an American diplomat and educator. In my experience, a most important element of what has always made America truly great in our international standing is not only our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for all, but also our national pride and celebration of our diverse origins as one American people: that is, the motto "E Pluribus Unum" so aptly engraved on our very national currency.

As a Marylander, I find that an important element of our quality of life and our economic and cultural dynamism is exactly the kind of celebration of our extraordinarily rich and diverse heritage that HB 0899 would further strengthen and establish as a particular, proud element of Maryland's State identity or "branding" in a highly competitive world. In so doing, it could only add to Maryland's attractiveness to our fellow Americans and to those from abroad who are considering Maryland as a place to live, raise a family, invest, manufacture, farm, or do any other business; or to visit for study, research, medical treatment, or simple tourism in an environment that is not only naturally beautiful, but also welcoming to all.

Sincerely,

/s/

Francis J. Ricciardone

US Ambassador, ret.

Commissioner, Governor's Commission on Middle East – American Affairs

HB899 Muslim American and Jewish American Heritage

Uploaded by: Laura Salganik

Position: FAV



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Testimony: General Provisions - Commemorative Months - Muslim American Heritage and Jewish American Heritage Months
Organization: Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD
Submitting: Laura Salganik, Chair
Position: FAVORABLE
Hearing Date: April 3, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council is submitting this testimony in favor of HB899, which requires the Governor to annually proclaim certain months as Muslim-American Heritage and Jewish American Heritage months.

Many Marylanders know few if any Jews or Muslims, who together constitute about 10 percent of the population. In addition, they know little about the long history of both Jews and Muslims in the United States and the contributions that Jews and Muslims have made to our State in the arts, business, academic, and public service fields.

As Jews, we know what it feels like to be a small minority in a group of people who know very little about who we are; at the same time they assume a lot of things about us that we are not. Activities around Heritage months for both Jews and Muslims can make a real contribution to alleviating this feeling for us and our Muslim fellow Marylanders.

We urge the committee to give a favorable report to this important legislation.

GOCI_FAV_HB899 - Muslim& Jewish Heritage Months (1

Uploaded by: Lawrence Walker

Position: FAV



**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

HB899 Written Testimony_ Mona A. Kishore.pdf

Uploaded by: Mona Kishore

Position: FAV

April 1, 2025

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

I am writing today as a commissioner on the Middle Eastern American Affairs Commission within the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, and as a proud Maryland resident, to express my strong support for HB 899. I respectfully request a favorable report on this bill, which seeks to establish Muslim American Heritage Month and Jewish American Heritage Month in our state.

As a third culture kid and someone in an interfaith marriage, I chose to make Maryland my home because of its deep history of embracing diverse communities. Maryland has fostered a sense of belonging that transcends religious and cultural differences. Though I am the only Muslim in my Jewish neighborhood, I have always felt welcomed and part of the community. This bill is a meaningful step in recognizing the contributions of Muslim and Jewish Americans and reinforcing Maryland's commitment to inclusion.

By passing HB 899, we celebrate the values of unity, shared heritage, and mutual understanding that make Maryland a stronger, more connected state. I urge you to support this important initiative.

Sincerely,
Mona Abdel-Halim Kishore
7314 University Avenue
Glen Echo, MD 20812

Testimony Senate Supporting HB0899 Jewish and Mus

Uploaded by: Rabbi Susan Grossman

Position: FAV

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

Rabbi Dr. Susan Grossman

Rabbi Emerita

Beth Shalom Congregation

8070 Harriet Tubman Lane

Columbia, Maryland 21044

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>.