

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 303
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606
Benjamin.Brooks@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Windsor Mill Office
8419 Liberty Road, Suite B
Windsor Mill, Maryland 21244
410-496-4037

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 191
State Designation – State Song – “the Heart of Maryland”

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 12, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of this committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 191, State Designations- State Song – “The Heart of Maryland”.

For more than 80 years, Maryland’s official state song was Maryland, My Maryland, adopted in 1939. The lyrics were written during the Civil War and reflect the perspectives and conflicts of that era, including references to the Confederacy and criticism of President Abraham Lincoln. Over time, many Marylanders came to feel that the song no longer reflected the shared values and unity of our state today.

Nearly a decade ago, Maryland convened a State Song Advisory Group of historians and cultural experts to examine whether our official state song reflected our values. The group unanimously concluded that Maryland, My Maryland was not inclusive and did not represent modern Maryland.

Recognizing this, the Maryland General Assembly voted to repeal the song in 2021. That action took an important step in acknowledging our history while affirming that the symbols representing our state should reflect who we are today. However, the repeal also left Maryland without an official state song.

Now is the right time to take the next step. Establishing a new state song allows Maryland to replace a symbol rooted in division with one that celebrates unity, pride, and the many communities that make our state unique. The Advisory Group laid out clear criteria for what a state song should be: something that celebrates our people, is unique to Maryland, and can be proudly sung by all Marylanders.

The Heart of Maryland embodies those very principles. Its message centers on the beauty of our landscapes, the strength of our communities, and the shared pride Marylanders feel in calling this state home. The song reflects unity rather than division and tells a story that Marylanders from every region and background can recognize as their own.

By adopting **The Heart of Maryland**, the General Assembly would not only restore an important state symbol but do so in a way that aligns with the thoughtful guidance already provided by historians and cultural experts who studied this issue.

State songs are more than ceremonial; they are expressions of identity and pride that celebrate the people, landscapes, and shared values of a state. They are sung at civic events, taught in schools, and serve as a unifying symbol for residents across generations.

Establishing a new state song provides Maryland with an opportunity to turn the page while honoring our rich history, diverse communities, and enduring spirit. A new song can celebrate the beauty of our state, the strength of our communities, and the ideals that unite Marylanders.

For these reasons, I respectfully request designation of “The Heart of Maryland,” written by Jayla Elise for the Maryland 250 Project, as the State Song with passage of SB 191.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "With kindest regards,".

Benjamin Brooks