



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 191  
State Designation – State Song “The Heart of Maryland”  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Hearing Date: March 12, 2026**

**Submitted by:** Holly Gilpin, Director of Tourism and Heritage  
Dorchester County, Maryland — **FAVORABLE**

Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of Tourism and Heritage for **\*\*Dorchester County—the birthplace of Harriet Tubman and the heart of Maryland’s heritage tourism—\*\***I am pleased to offer testimony in support of **Senate Bill 191**, which proposes designating “*The Heart of Maryland*,” written and performed by Dorchester County artist **Jayla Elise**, as an official state song for Maryland. As our state prepares to celebrate **Maryland 250 and the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026**, this song beautifully reflects the landscapes, history, and spirit that define Maryland.

“*The Heart of Maryland*” celebrates our state **from the mountains of Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay**, capturing the pride and identity shared by communities across Maryland. Through music, it tells the story of a state known for its natural beauty, vibrant communities, and deep cultural roots.

The song also honors **Maryland’s proud legacy as the Free State** and recognizes the generations of Marylanders who have served our nation. Maryland’s strong military tradition—including our role as the **home of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis**—is reflected in the themes of service, courage, and dedication found throughout the song.

The final words of the song recognize **Harriet Tubman**, Dorchester County’s most famous freedom fighter. The phrase “**leave no one behind**” echoes Tubman’s leadership on the Underground Railroad and reflects Maryland’s enduring commitment to freedom, resilience, and justice—values that continue to define our state and inspire visitors from around the world who travel to Maryland to experience this powerful history.

Recognizing “*The Heart of Maryland*” as an official state song celebrates not only the talent of a Maryland artist, but also the shared story of our state—**its people, its heritage, and its enduring spirit from the mountains to the shore.**

**As Maryland approaches the historic Maryland 250 commemoration, Dorchester County is proud to help tell our state's story, and this song provides a powerful way to celebrate Maryland's heritage, resilience, and unity for generations to come.**

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report on Senate Bill 191.**

Sincerely,

**Holly Gilpin**

Director of Tourism and Heritage  
Dorchester County, Maryland

