

Dear Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, my name is Tahira Hussain, and I am here today to support SB308 which hopes to establish January and May as Muslim and Jewish heritage months in the state of Maryland.

Besides the several contributions to this state that I am sure everyone on this committee has been touched by or benefitted from, this bill also comes at a time when acknowledgement, education, and understanding of Muslims and Jewish people is very important.

Muslim Heritage bills have passed in several states and counties in this country, and it's time for Maryland to get on board and keep up our reputation as leaders in protective legislation that benefits constituents.

Not only will this bill give deserved gratitude to these communities that have always viewed themselves as part of a whole and have contributed immensely towards a sense of community, but this bill also serves as a form of prevention for growing xenophobia against our fellow Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. This bill shows our partnership and shared goals. Bills such as these may seem small to some, but the emergence of antisemitism, and Islamophobia on social media platforms that our young children are exposed to every day are incredibly influential, even on a subconscious level. This is a way to fight back and prevent further use of our identities to further a political agenda or breed hate between all of us. We are tired of having to be the ones to say "not in our name". We need everyone in this state to have the exposure, appreciation, and education to say, "not in their name".

Muslims have been part of the American fabric since the 1500s, and an overwhelming majority of us have assimilated and done great work for our American communities, including myself. If it were not for the acceptance of my Howard County community members, I would not have been able to get involved in human trafficking issues and increase awareness among my Muslim community about these issues. Acceptance leads to collaboration, which leads to awareness, which leads to change. Maryland Muslims are doctors who save lives, engineers who build our bridges, staff at our children's schools, our legislators who pass revolutionary bills. My husband is a world-renowned oncologist at the University of Maryland for 39 years, my daughters pursuing higher education in Psychology, Geophysics, and Environmental health. I have taken my law experience from Pakistan to help my beloved Marylanders. We love to work for our community, and we are lucky to live in a county that support that, but not all counties are this fortunate. Our communities need this bill, but the state of Maryland needs this bill in order to maintain and improve the basic

humanity between all of us that is attacked and taken advantage of by our federal representatives every single day.

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