

# **SB0191 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ashli Mebane

Position: FAV

March 12, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashli Mebane, and I'm a resident of Oxon Hill, Maryland. I'm writing to share my support for SB0191.

Maryland has a lot of pride and history, and I think our state song should reflect that in a positive way. It feels like a song people can actually connect with and be proud to hear.

As someone who lives here and cares about our state, I believe choosing "Heart of Maryland" as the official state song would give Maryland something uplifting that represents who we are today. I respectfully ask that you support and pass SB0191.

Sincerely,

Ashli Mebane

[mebanemarketingcompany@gmail.com](mailto:mebanemarketingcompany@gmail.com)

914-602-7612

**2026 03 10 SB191 written testimony Parris N. Glend**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Chair, Senator Brian J. Feldman  
Vice Chair, Senator Cheryl C. Kagan  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

**Regarding: Support of SB191**

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee members,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 191 (SB191), State Designations – State Song - “The Heart of Maryland”.

“The Heart of Maryland” was written by 22 year-old singer-songwriter Jayla Elise of Cambridge, Maryland, formerly of Prince George’s County, for the MD Two Fifty Commission. Jayla first sang at a Commission meeting in Cambridge in April 2025, and again at a Commission meeting in August 2025 in Hagerstown. Jayla also wrote a national song for the 250th, “America’s Calling” and “Dorchester Dreams” which is now the official song of Dorchester County. Jayla has sung “The Heart of Maryland” at minor league baseball stadiums throughout Maryland, in schools where she is also inspiring interest in young Marylanders in the 250th, and at many community events including the Waterfowl Festival in Easton last November.

In this Semiquincentennial year, the MD Two Fifty Commission is leading an inclusive statewide commemoration throughout Maryland, guided by Executive Order 01.01.2024.29, with the themes of history, civics, and service. Jayla’s words in “The Heart of Maryland” are very much in sync with the intended unity and togetherness of the Semiquincentennial, with the natural beauty and spirit of people throughout the state of Maryland, and with the focus on our future.

Maryland has not had a state song since 2021 and is one of just two states (the other is New Jersey) without a state song. Maryland needs a state song, and I cannot think of anything more appropriate than Jayla Elise’s “The Heart of Maryland”. I encourage a favorable vote on SB191.

Sincerely,  
The Honorable Parris N. Glendening  
Chair, MD Two Fifty Commission

**JTM SB 191 LOS 3.9.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

**The Honorable Benjamin T. Brooks, Sr.**  
**James Senate Office Building, Room 303**  
**11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401**  
**March 9, 2026**

Dear Senator Brooks,

It is with sound reflection and deep conviction that I write to offer my unwavering support for Senate Bill 191, State Designations - State Song - "The Heart of Maryland" ahead of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee bill hearing scheduled for Thursday, March 12 at 1PM ET. Thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this legislation.

As you are well aware, SB 191 aims to designate "The Heart of Maryland" as the State song in keeping with Executive Order 01.01.2023.10. Additionally, Ms. Jayla Elise—*the creative author who composed its lyrics and the talented artist who performs its rhythms*—has been generous in sharing musical gifts that amplify the Maryland 250 Commission themes and inspire an array of communities on both sides of the Chesapeake Bay.

On the Eastern Shore, and in Dorchester specifically, the impact driven by Ms. Elise is unmistakable. The Dorchester County Council adopted her original as the first-ever official county song in June 2025, which has meant a great deal to the aspiring among our youngest. Since, the "Dorchester Dreams" singer-songwriter has been focal to ushering powerful moments of State reflection such as the very first Maryland 250 statewide symposium at the Maryland Department of Planning headquarters in Crownsville, the Maryland Department of Transportation unveiling of a new roadside historical marker during International Underground Railroad Month last September on the same date Harriet Tubman escaped slavery in 1849, leading participants through "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to open the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture October Public Meeting as part of University of Maryland Eastern Shore celebrations centered on a 135-year legacy as an 1890 Land-Grant institution, the Maryland Humanities 2025 One Maryland One Book statewide author tour for *KIN: Rooted in Hope* at Riversdale House Museum whose roots date back to the founding of Maryland as a colony and the Waterfowl Festival in Easton, which draws a global crowd of ~30,000 annually.

Ms. Elise embodies a striking balance of integrity, formidable strength, restorative warmth, pure joy and an inspiring ability to advance belonging. Maryland Heritage Areas Authority coverage in Dorchester is singular and titled "Heart of Chesapeake Country." Ms. Elise delivers a vision for Maryland and a voice for America that underscores this title. There is none more deserving of this honor or adoption than this exemplary Marylander.

An immeasurable metric that cannot go without note is how her moral compass and service have transformed local trajectories through unhurried and authentic solidarity, including my own. I strongly urge the Committee to support this legislation.

Sincerest Regards,

**Jaelon T. Moaney**



**Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture, Vice Chair**  
**Rural Maryland Council, District 5—Caroline, Dorchester & Talbot Counties**

# **SB191\_Brooks.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

**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

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**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

**Cory Lyman- Letter of Support for SB0191 (2).pdf**

Uploaded by: Cory Lyman

Position: FAV

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

For most of my life, I've believed that the stories we tell about where we come from shape the people we become. As a writer, I've spent years thinking about how words, and music carry the spirit of a place from one generation to the next. My name is Cory Lyman. I'm 37 years old, a Baltimore resident, and someone who has spent many summers working with young people. Those experiences are why I believe "*The Heart of Maryland*," written by Jayla Elise, should be recognized as the official state song of Maryland.

Maryland is more than a place on a map. From Baltimore to small towns across the state, our identity is shaped by the people who live here and the values we share. A state song should reflect that living identity and speak to the future as much as the past.

Working with children has shown me how much young people want to feel connected. Music has a powerful ability to create that connection. Recognizing "The Heart of Maryland" as our official state song would send a powerful message to the next generation: that Maryland's identity is alive, evolving, and shaped by their voices as well.

For the communities I've worked with, I see this bringing Maryland forward. I believe this song deserves that honor, and SB0191 should pass.

Best,

Cory Lyman

443-425-7595

# **Letter of Support for “The Heart of Maryland” by J**

Uploaded by: Derrick Taylor

Position: FAV

## Letter of Support for “The Heart of Maryland” by Jayla Elise as the Maryland State Song

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the recognition of “The Heart of Maryland,” performed by Jayla Elise, as the official State Song of Maryland.

At just 22 years of age, Jayla Elise has already demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the people of Maryland. Originally from Prince George’s County and now residing in Dorchester County, she represents the unity and diversity that make our state so special. Jayla bridges communities across Maryland and embodies the spirit of service, resilience, and pride that our state stands for.

Over the past several years, Jayla has invested more than 2,000 hours performing, making appearances, and engaging directly with young people and communities throughout Maryland. Her music is more than entertainment—it is a message of hope, pride, and belonging for the people of this state.

Jayla has also dedicated significant time to youth development and mental health advocacy. Through her outreach, school visits, performances, and community events, she encourages young people to value themselves, speak openly about mental health, and pursue their dreams with confidence. Her work helps young people feel seen, heard, and supported during some of the most critical moments in their lives.

She has also supported and collaborated with organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, Junior Achievers helping to mentor and inspire youth while using music as a positive force for connection and opportunity.

Jayla Elise is truly a representation of the promise and progress that generations before us fought for. Her work reflects the values of perseverance, community, and unity that define Maryland. Through her leadership, talent, and service, she continues to uplift the very communities that shaped her.

“The Heart of Maryland” captures the pride, history, and spirit of our state. Recognizing this song as Maryland’s State Song would not only honor a powerful musical work, but also celebrate a young Marylander who has dedicated herself to uplifting the state and its people.

I respectfully urge your support for the designation of “The Heart of Maryland” as the official State Song of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Derrick Taylor-Dixon

Chief Executive Officer for Barzini Family Music

Philadelphia, PA

# Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 191.pd

Uploaded by: HOLLY GILPIN

Position: FAV



**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



**TAG Support Letter 2026 SB 191 Heart of Maryland.p**

Uploaded by: Janeen Birckhead

Position: FAV



WES MOORE  
GOVERNOR  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

STATE OF MARYLAND  
MILITARY DEPARTMENT  
FIFTH REGIMENT ARMORY  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201-2288

JANEEN L. BIRCKHEAD  
MAJOR GENERAL  
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

February 17, 2026

Chair Brian Feldman  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman and Members of The Committee:

The Maryland Military Department respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 191 – State Designations – State Song – The Heart of Maryland.

“The Heart of Maryland” was written and performed by Jayla Elise, a singer-songwriter from Dorchester County, Maryland. The song was released in May 2025 as part of the Maryland 250 project, which is part of the broader national commemoration of America’s 250th anniversary this year.

The Maryland Military Department has long recognized the power of heraldry, tradition, and symbol in shaping institutional identity and inspiring collective purpose. Just as our state flag, motto, and military colors carry forward the values of those who came before us, a state song serves as a living expression of who we are as Marylanders. “The Heart of Maryland” captures that spirit with authenticity and pride, and its adoption would mark a meaningful milestone in Maryland’s history as the state commemorates 250 years of American independence.

The Maryland Military Department strongly supports Senate Bill 191 and urges the Committee to report it favorably.

The point of contact for this letter is Dr. Tony Campbell, reachable at (443) 956-0108, or [tony.campbell1@maryland.gov](mailto:tony.campbell1@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Janeen L. Birckhead in blue ink.

Janeen L. Birckhead  
Major General, Maryland National Guard  
The Adjutant General

# **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0191.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marquez White

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0191**  
**Marquez White — Cambridge, Maryland**

My name is Marquez, I'm 21 years old and I live in Cambridge, Maryland. I wanted to share my support for Senate Bill 0191 and the idea of making *The Heart of Maryland* by Jayla Elise the official state song.

Growing up here on the Eastern Shore, Maryland has always meant a lot to me. It's the people, the small towns, the Bay, and the pride people have in where they're from. When I first heard *The Heart of Maryland*, it honestly felt like a song that represents what living here feels like today. It has that sense of pride and connection that a lot of people my age feel about our state.

I think it would be really meaningful for Maryland to have a state song that reflects the present and the next generation too, not just the past. This song feels like something people across the state could connect to.

As someone who grew up here, I believe *The Heart of Maryland* would be a great choice for our state song. Thank you for taking the time to consider my support for Senate Bill 0191.

# **Testimony Senate Bill 191 The Heart of Maryland.pd**

Uploaded by: Patricia Maclay

Position: FAV

## Testimony for Senate Bill 191

### State Designation – State Song – “The Heart of Maryland”

Thank you Senators for your time. I am here to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 191.

So like everyone does these days, I asked AI ...Why do we need a State Song? The answer ...States adopt an official song primarily to evoke a sense of **cultural heritage, community unity, and state pride.**

Now I totally agree with this statement, and Jayla’s song checks all those boxes. However, what AI does not include in its summary, is the impact a song like this has on each of **us** when we hear or sing it aloud!

As a physician with a background in neuroscience, I would like to say that Jayla’s song has the capacity to lower our stress hormones and raise those body chemicals that act to calm us, or make us feel challenged...all while increasing our feelings of trust.

And no matter our race, ethnicity, or cultural background, the words of **this** song...act to connect each of us...not only to our great state...but also to one another!

Music is universally beneficial to all, and a song like *The Heart of Maryland*, acts as a powerful tool to create positive emotions about ourselves and our State.

When we hear the melody and words of **this** song, its poignant meaning and powerful inclusivity has the capacity to slow our heart rate, boost our mood, improve our memory and focus, lower our blood pressure, and foster greater social connection. Essentially, this song serves to make our entire bodies healthier...all the while uniting us as Marylanders.

So if feeling lonely, sing “*Together we Stand in the Heart of this Land*”....

Or if feeling anxious hum the words, “*We’ve weathered time, we’ve stood as one, Creating hope with every sun.*”

Jayla wanted to write the song that would **unify** all Marylanders, and I want to add, that...based upon science...her song does just that.

Senators, please vote yes and adopt *The Heart of Maryland* as our official State Song.

# **Testimony in support of SB0191 - State Designation**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0191\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

03/12/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0191 – FAVORABLE**

**State Designations - State Song - "The Heart of Maryland"**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0191, State Designations - State Song - "The Heart of Maryland"**

"Maryland, My Maryland" was a 9-stanza Confederate poem written by James Ryder Randall in April 1861, expressing outrage over Union troops in Baltimore and urging Maryland to secede. Adopted as the official state song in 1939, it was set to the tune of "O, Tannenbaum" but widely criticized for calling Abraham Lincoln a "despot" and referring to Northerners as "scum". **The song was officially repealed in May 2021.**<sup>1</sup>

The proud state of Maryland should have a state song and this one, written by a Marylander, is the best choice to become the replacement.

This bill will designate "The Heart of Maryland", written by Jayla Elise from Dorchester County for the Maryland 250 Project, as the State song.

<https://youtu.be/Z6u66UJW3LA?si=IISYeiWVm82G9Zft>

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass SB0191.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search "Maryland my maryland song history"

# **Letter to Support Senate Bill 0191- Victoria Tyson**

Uploaded by: Victoria Tyson

Position: FAV

Victoria Tyson

6958 WALKER MILL RD CAPITOL  
HEIGHTS MD 20743-7630 USA

12<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Witness Testimony: SB0191

Dear Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to express my support for SB0191 regarding the recognition of "Heart of Maryland" by Jayla Elise as a potential Maryland state song.

Maryland's symbols should reflect not only our history, but also the people and communities who continue to shape the state today. Music is one of the most powerful ways to bring people together, and songs that celebrate Maryland can help strengthen a connection across generations.

Considering a song like "Heart of Maryland" opens the door for new voices and perspectives to be part of how our state is represented. It shows that Maryland values creativity, culture, and the contributions of its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are rooting for this bill!

*Victoria Tyson*

Victoria Tyson