



House Government, Labor, And Elections Committee
The Honorable Melissa Wells, Chair
The Honorable Kenneth Kerr, Vice Chair

Mar 17, 2026

FAV | HB524 - General Provisions
Commemorative Months - African Heritage Month

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Antwan C. Brown, and I serve as the Administrative Director of African Affairs in the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. I am here today to respectfully express my support for **House Bill 524**, establishing African Heritage Month in Maryland.

Over the past three years working in the Governor's Office, I have had the privilege of working directly with African and African diaspora communities across our state. Through that work, I have seen firsthand the incredible contributions these communities are making to Maryland every single day.

The Impact of the African Diaspora

I have seen entrepreneurs building thriving small businesses, strengthening our economy, and creating jobs. I have met health professionals and educators who serve our communities with excellence and dedication. I have witnessed cultural organizations bringing people together through festivals, heritage celebrations, and youth mentorship programs.

I have also seen powerful milestones that reflect the innovation and determination within this community. Maryland is now home to the **first African woman winery owner**, an example of how African diaspora leaders are contributing to industries across our state in new and exciting ways.

Why This Recognition Matters

What stands out most in my work is the strong work ethic, deep cultural pride, and commitment to community that members of the African diaspora bring to Maryland. These contributions are helping shape the:

- **Economic growth** of our local markets;
- **Cultural vibrancy** of our neighborhoods; and
- **Global connections** of our state.

100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032

Establishing African Heritage Month would give Maryland the opportunity to formally recognize and celebrate these contributions while encouraging education, cultural awareness, and community engagement across the state.

Conclusion

Maryland is stronger because of the African diaspora. Recognizing African Heritage Month allows us to celebrate that impact and continue building bridges across our communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a **favorable report** on House Bill 524.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Antwan C. Brown

03/12/26

Dr. Antwan C. Brown Dr. Antwan C. Brown (Mar 12, 2026 12:53:22 EDT) _____ Date _____

Administrative Director, Governor's Commission on African Affairs