



Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections
Testimony: House Bill 524 – Commemorative Months – African Heritage Month
Organization: Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD
Submitting: Laura Salganik, Chair
Position: FAVORABLE
Hearing Date: March 17, 2026

Dear Chairman Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County is submitting this testimony in favor of HB 524. Maryland is the home of the fourth largest share of African immigrants in the country. According to the Census Bureau and the Annie Casey Foundation, about 275,000 Marylanders are African-born or the children of immigrants from Africa. Together with other African-Americans, they constitute about 30 percent of the state’s population.

Yet many in Maryland know very little about Africa and about African immigrants in our state. Those with African heritage have contributed to many areas of Maryland’s strength through their entrepreneurship, artistry, leadership, and generosity – to name just a few areas. African Heritage Month would officially recognize and communicate these contributions to a wider audience.

The Jewish community understands the benefit of an official Heritage Month. With a population not radically different in size to the number of immigrants from Africa, many of our neighbors know very little about our religion, culture, holidays, etc. For example, since Howard County has instituted a Jewish Heritage month, Jewish students have prepared bulletin boards about their heritage so others can learn about them, and they have reported pride in seeing these posters in their school. African Heritage Month would make this same opportunity for recognition and learning available to others in the state.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 524.