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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**HB661: General Provisions – Commemorative Months – Muslim
American Heritage and Jewish American Heritage Months
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
March 17, 2026
SUPPORT**

Background: House Bill 661 would require the Governor annually to proclaim January as Muslim American Heritage Month and May as Jewish American Heritage Month; and require the proclamations to urge certain organizations to observe the months with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

Written Comments: Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) in May and Muslim American Heritage Month (MAHM) in January, both serve to celebrate the rich history, cultural contributions, and experiences of these communities, fostering understanding and inclusion.

May was chosen as the month for JAHM in part due to the 350th anniversary of Jews in America, marking their arrival in New Amsterdam. May was officially designated Federally as Jewish American Heritage Month in 2006 by President George W. Bush.

January was chosen as the month for MAHM to honor the anniversary of the death of Yarrow Mamout, an African American Muslim former slave, who purchased his own freedom and became a financier.

At a time when our communities are plagued with divisive rhetoric and hate speech, it is important that we use these opportunities to celebrate our differences and better understand our neighbors. By requiring the Governor to annually proclaim these respective months, we are ensuring Maryland's commitment to this mission.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB661.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.