

March 7, 2019

**Testimony on SB 472  
General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Caribbean Day in Maryland  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**Position: Favorable w/ Amendments**

The Montgomery County Caribbean American Advisory Group (CAAG) is one of six ethnic advisory groups that work in partnership with Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich's Office of Community Partnerships (OCP). The OCP works to strengthen relationships between Montgomery County Government and the residents it serves, with a special focus on underserved and emerging communities. CAAG represents those residents whose heritage is any country in the Caribbean region and recommends policy related to Caribbean affairs to the County Executive, ensuring he is well informed of and able to act effectively to respond to the needs of our community.

CAAG supports SB 472 which would establish a Caribbean Day in Maryland helping to bring greater visibility to the culture and contributions of residents of Caribbean heritage throughout the state.

For hundreds of years, Caribbean Americans have contributed to the artistic, legal, literary, diplomatic, business, athletic, medical, and more endeavors that have helped shape American society. Great leaders like former Attorney General Eric Holder whose family came from Barbados, General Colin Powell whose family came from Jamaica, Constance Baker Motley whose family come from Nevis, and Shirley Chisholm whose family came from Guyana and Barbados have helped to open numerous doors for communities of color all throughout the country. In the state, current Caribbean leaders like Attorney General Aisha Braveboy, Senator Nathan-Pulliam, Delegate Wilkins, Acevero, and Boyce work tirelessly to create a better life for all.

Maryland has been a national leader in supporting the Caribbean community. Montgomery County was the first to establish a committee within local government to give Caribbean residents a seat at the table and on a state level, we were the first to establish a Commission on Caribbean Affairs. Let's continue by becoming one of the first to establish a Caribbean Day.

Caribbean Day would give us the visibility by providing us with not only a day of celebration, but also education – serving as an opportunity to address disparities within the community, education about our culture, and more.

While we support the effort to establish a Caribbean Day, we believe commemorating the day on the first Monday in June instead of August would be in the best interest in the community. It would provide the state with an opportunity to also commemorate Caribbean American Heritage Month which it has neglected to do in recent years and would eliminate any confusion around timing as many have expressed concern that the proposed date would instead become a celebration of Jamaican Independence Day or Caribbean Emancipation Day which would exclude certain countries.

Caribbean Day is a step forward for our community and for the state as it works to not only support ethnic communities, but also celebrate our contributions. We urge a favorable report and ask that you take our suggested amendment into consideration.