



ARAWAK TAINO JOINT MARYLAND STATE RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION PACKET

Supporting a State Joint Resolution and Proclamation
Recognizing the Arawak Taíno People and Establishing
Taíno Cultural Heritage Day in Maryland



Submitted by:

Denyzio Laboy

Founder, Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.) Boyds,
Maryland

Prepared for:

**The Office of the Governor of Maryland, Maryland Department of Indian
Affairs, and Maryland State General Assembly**

Date: June 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Page 3-4 Letter of Transmittal
- Page 5. Executive Summary
- Page 6. Purpose of Petition / Legislative Request
- Page 7. About the Petitioner
- Page 8. Historical correction
- Page 9-10. Historical Context of the Arawak Taíno People
- Page 11. Proposed Maryland State Resolution
- Page 12. Implementation and Educational Opportunities
- Page 13- 18. Government Proclamations and Legislative Records
- Page 19-21. Policy Relevance to Maryland and MD Ethnic Demographics
- Page 22-24. Why Recognition in Maryland Matters
- Page 25. Scholarly References of Taíno Existence
- Page 26-49. Community Support and Public Endorsements
- Page 50- 51. Closing Statement
- Page 52. Appendix A – Support Signatures and Letters of Support
- Page 53. Appendix B – Maryland Caribbean Ethnic Demographics
- Page 54- 57. Appendix C – Maryland State Resolution-DRAFT
- Page 58- 60. Appendix D – Maryland State Gubernatorial Proclamation-DRAFT
- Page 61. References
- Page 62-63 Montgomery County Maryland Proclamation / Governor Citation
- Page 64. Online Community Petition Support QR Code

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Governor's Office

March 2026

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor / State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Maryland State General Assembly /Speaker
90 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

E. Keith Colston
Administrative Director
Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Governor Moore , Speaker Peña-Melnyk, and Mr. Colston:

This initiative was developed and advanced through advocacy efforts led by the Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), under the leadership of founder Denyzio Laboy.

I respectfully submit this Executive Briefing Packet requesting consideration of a **State Proclamation Recognizing the Arawak Taíno People and Establishing Taíno Heritage Day in Maryland.**

This initiative seeks to promote cultural recognition and historical awareness by formally acknowledging the enduring legacy of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the **Arawak Taíno** and by establishing the fourth Saturday in April as **Taíno Heritage Day across the State of Maryland.**

For generations, historical narratives commonly repeated the assertion that the Taíno people were eliminated following European colonization, often stating that they had been **“wiped off the face of the earth.”** Today, modern scholarship, anthropology, and genetic research have confirmed that these claims were historically incomplete. Taíno descendants survived centuries of migration, cultural adaptation, and intermarriage and remain present throughout the Caribbean diaspora and across the United States.

Maryland is home to a diverse Caribbean population. According to U.S. Census data, approximately **294,000 Maryland residents identify with Caribbean ancestry**, including individuals with heritage from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and The Bahamas. Many within these communities maintain ancestral connections to the Indigenous Caribbean peoples historically known as the Taíno.

Issuing a statewide proclamation recognizing Taíno Heritage Day would celebrate the cultural heritage of these communities while encouraging educational awareness and community engagement surrounding Indigenous Caribbean history.

Such recognition would align with Maryland's longstanding commitment to diversity, cultural inclusion, and historical education. It would also position Maryland among a growing number of jurisdictions across the United States that have acknowledged the continued presence and cultural contributions of Taíno descendants.

I respectfully submit this proposal for your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to discuss how this initiative may contribute to Maryland's ongoing commitment to cultural recognition and inclusive public history.

Respectfully,

Denyzio Laboy

Denyzio Laboy

Maryland Resident and Community Advocate

Founder – Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.)

support@tainonatives.org

Executive Order-Proclamation Briefing

This Executive Briefing Packet respectfully requests consideration of a **State Executive Order-Proclamation recognizing the cultural heritage and continued presence of the Arawak Taíno people and establishing the fourth Saturday in April as Taíno Heritage Day in the State of Maryland.**

The Arawak Taíno were among the earliest Indigenous civilizations encountered by Europeans in the Caribbean during the late fifteenth century. Their societies flourished across islands that include Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, The Bahamas, and the Virgin Islands.

For centuries, historical narratives commonly repeated the assertion that the Taíno people had been “**wiped off the face of the earth**” following European colonization. Modern scholarship has corrected this interpretation. Archaeological research, anthropological study, and genetic evidence confirm that Taíno descendants survived colonization and continue to live throughout the Caribbean diaspora and across the United States today.

Maryland’s diverse population reflects these historical connections. According to U.S. Census data, approximately **294,000 Maryland residents identify with Caribbean ancestry**, including Puerto Rican, Dominican, Jamaican, Haitian, and Bahamian heritage. Many within these communities retain ancestral and cultural ties to Indigenous Caribbean populations historically known as the Taíno.

A statewide proclamation recognizing Taíno Heritage Day would celebrate the cultural heritage of these communities while encouraging educational awareness regarding Indigenous Caribbean history and contributions.

Issuing such a proclamation would reinforce Maryland’s longstanding commitment to cultural inclusion and public recognition of the diverse histories that shape the state’s communities.

If adopted, Maryland would join a growing number of jurisdictions acknowledging the survival and cultural heritage of Taíno descendants throughout the Americas.

PURPOSE OF PETITION / LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

This petition respectfully requests that the **Office of the Governor issue a State Executive Order- Proclamation recognizing the Arawak Taíno people and establishing Taíno Heritage Day in Maryland.**

The purpose of this proclamation would be to:

- Recognize the cultural heritage of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the Arawak Taíno
- Celebrate the heritage of Maryland residents with Caribbean ancestry
- Encourage educational and cultural programming highlighting Indigenous Caribbean history
- Promote public awareness regarding the survival and cultural legacy of Taíno descendants

Such a proclamation would provide statewide recognition of the Indigenous Caribbean heritage that forms part of the historical identity of many Maryland residents today. This effort directly aligns and further emphasizes the recent initiative he endorsed on November 2023. found here: https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/Proclamations/Attachments/25/AMERICAN%20INDIAN%20HERITAGE%20MONTH.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The proclamation would serve as symbolic and educational recognition consistent with Maryland's values of diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness. By supporting this proclamation, the State of Maryland would take an important step toward correcting a long-standing historical narrative that has inaccurately suggested the Taíno Indians were all killed off out of existence. Affirming instead, that Taíno descendants continue to exist, contribute, and maintain their cultural identity today. In doing so, the State would help advance a more accurate understanding of history and publicly acknowledge the enduring presence and legacy of the Taíno people within Maryland's diverse communities and across the United States.

ABOUT THE PETITIONER

I am a Maryland resident, community advocate, and founder committed to promoting education, cultural awareness, and the preservation of Indigenous Caribbean heritage.

My work focuses on honoring the legacy of the Arawak Taíno people, the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean whose descendants extend throughout the Americas, including the State of Maryland.

My advocacy is rooted in a lifelong commitment to community service, empowerment, and equal access to opportunity.

For more than three decades I served the United States in federal public service, beginning my career as a police officer and later advancing to serve as a United States Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security. Following many years in federal law enforcement, I transitioned my career toward public service leadership, ultimately serving as a Special Emphasis Program Manager at the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) where my responsibilities included workforce equity initiatives, community outreach, and expanding opportunities for diverse communities within the federal workforce.

Throughout my career, I have worked to build bridges between institutions and communities while promoting initiatives that advance education, awareness, and inclusion.

The passion behind this work is also deeply personal.

When I was ten years old, during Native American Heritage Month in my fifth-grade classroom, my teacher asked if any students were Native American. Proudly, I raised my hand and said, “I am! I’m Arawak Taino!”

My teacher responded in front of the class, stating **“those people no longer exist. They were all killed off the face of the earth”**

That moment has stayed with me throughout my life. It demonstrated how historical misunderstanding can erase the identities of living people and communities.

Today, historical scholarship confirms what many Caribbean families have long known: **the Taíno people survived.**

My work today is driven by the belief that future generations should never be told that their ancestors were erased from history.

Through education, awareness, and recognition, we can ensure that the history of Indigenous Caribbean peoples is represented truthfully and respectfully.

CORRECTING THE HISTORICAL RECORD

For centuries, narratives describing the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean frequently stated that the Taíno population was entirely destroyed following European colonization.

Many historical accounts and textbooks repeated the claim that the Taíno people had been **“wiped off the face of the earth.”**

Modern scholarship has demonstrated that this narrative is historically inaccurate.

Archaeological evidence, anthropological research, historical documentation, and genetic studies confirm that Taíno descendants survived and continue to live throughout the Caribbean and the Americas today.

Research conducted by leading Caribbean scholars including Irving Rouse, Samuel M. Wilson, José Oliver, and William Keegan has documented the persistence of Taíno cultural identity across centuries of colonial transformation.

Recent genetic studies examining mitochondrial DNA across Caribbean populations have also confirmed Indigenous ancestry among modern Caribbean communities, further demonstrating the continuity of Taíno lineage.

Today, descendants of Indigenous Caribbean peoples continue to preserve cultural traditions, language revitalization efforts, and heritage organizations dedicated to sustaining Taíno identity.

Recognizing this historical continuity is essential to correcting longstanding misconceptions and ensuring that Indigenous Caribbean history is represented accurately within public education and cultural discourse.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ARAWAK TAÍNO PEOPLE

The Arawak Taíno people were among the principal Indigenous civilizations of the Caribbean prior to European colonization.

Archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological research identifies the Taíno as part of the broader Arawakan language family, a cultural and linguistic group originating in northern South America that gradually expanded throughout the Caribbean basin over many centuries.

Prior to European contact in the late fifteenth century, Taíno societies flourished across islands including:

- Puerto Rico (Borikén)
- Hispaniola
- Cuba
- Jamaica
- The Bahamas
- The Virgin Islands

These communities maintained organized village societies known as **yucayeques**, governed by hereditary leaders known as **caciques**, and sustained complex systems of agriculture, trade, governance, and cultural expression.

Two regions historically inhabited by Taíno populations—**Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands—remain territories of the United States today.** This establishes a direct historical connection between Taíno Indigenous heritage and the broader historical narrative of the United States.

Historical and archaeological evidence also indicates that Arawakan-speaking peoples engaged in extensive maritime travel throughout the Caribbean and into parts of the southeastern region of what is now the United States, including areas of present-day Florida.

Although early colonial narratives often claimed that the Taíno population was entirely eliminated, contemporary scholarship has demonstrated that these claims were historically incomplete. Taíno descendants persisted through centuries of migration, cultural adaptation, and intermarriage across the Caribbean and the Americas.

Today, descendants of Indigenous Caribbean peoples continue to maintain cultural traditions, language revitalization initiatives, and heritage organizations throughout the United States, including within the State of Maryland.

Understanding this historical context is essential to recognizing that the legacy of the Arawak Taíno people extends beyond the Caribbean islands and continues to shape communities and cultural identities throughout the Americas today.

MARYLAND STATE RESOLUTION PROCLAMATION EXECUTIVE ORDER A Joint Resolution Proclamation Concerning

Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People and Establishment of Taíno Heritage Day

I respectfully submit this Legislative Petition on behalf of the Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), the growing coalition of Maryland residents, community leaders, educators, elected officials, organizations, and supporters who have joined together in requesting official State recognition of the continuing existence and enduring cultural heritage of the Arawak Taíno people.

This submission respectfully requests two distinct, yet complementary, governmental actions: First, that the Maryland General Assembly adopt a Joint Resolution formally acknowledging the continuing existence of the Arawak Taíno people and recognizing the significant historical, cultural, and educational contributions of their descendants residing within the State of Maryland.

Second, that the Governor of Maryland issue an official Governor's Proclamation designating the Fourth Saturday in April of each year as "Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day" within the State of Maryland. Although separate in legal authority, these actions together would affirm Maryland's longstanding commitment to historical accuracy, educational opportunity, cultural understanding, and the recognition of communities whose histories have often been misunderstood or overlooked.

PURPOSE OF THIS PETITION

This petition is not a request for federal tribal recognition, sovereign status, governmental privileges, gaming rights, land claims, or the creation of any legal entitlement. Rather, it respectfully seeks formal State recognition of a well-documented historical reality: that descendants of the Indigenous Caribbean people known as the Arawak Taíno continue to live, work, raise families, contribute to their communities, and preserve elements of their cultural heritage throughout Maryland and across the United States. The requested Resolution and Proclamation are intended solely to: promote historical accuracy; recognize the continuing cultural presence of Arawak Taíno descendants; encourage voluntary educational and cultural programming; celebrate the Indigenous heritage shared by many Maryland residents whose ancestry traces to Puerto Rico (Borikén), the United States Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, The Bahamas, and other Caribbean regions historically inhabited by the Arawak Taíno people; foster greater public understanding of Indigenous Caribbean history and its continuing relevance within Maryland's diverse communities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

If recognized, **Arawak Taíno Heritage Day** could serve as a catalyst for voluntary educational and cultural initiatives throughout the State of Maryland.

Potential activities could include:

- Public lectures hosted by museums and cultural institutions
- Educational resources and lesson materials for schools
- Cultural demonstrations including traditional music, dance, and storytelling
- Academic research partnerships with universities studying Caribbean Indigenous history
- Cultural exhibitions highlighting Taíno art, language, and traditions
- Community heritage festivals celebrating Indigenous Caribbean culture

These initiatives would be voluntary and community-driven and could involve participation from:

- Schools and universities
- Museums and historical societies
- Libraries and cultural institutions
- Nonprofit organizations
- Caribbean cultural associations

Through these educational initiatives, Taíno Heritage Day could serve as a platform for promoting historical awareness and cross-cultural understanding throughout Maryland.

CURRENT GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE ORDER- AND LEGISLATIVE ORDER RECORDS

Across the United States, a growing number of jurisdictions have issued proclamations and legislative recognitions acknowledging the cultural heritage and survival of Taíno descendants.

These recognitions reflect increasing scholarly and public understanding that Taíno descendants remain an important part of the cultural landscape of the Americas.

This appendix documents legislative resolutions and municipal proclamations across multiple U.S. jurisdictions acknowledging the cultural heritage, historical presence, and continued existence of Taíno-descended communities. These precedents demonstrate that governmental bodies have recognized the Taíno people and their diaspora through cultural and heritage acknowledgments.

1. Rhode Island General Assembly

Senate Resolution S2759 (2026)

Title: Senate Resolution Recognizing the Culture and Heritage of Taíno Descendants in Rhode Island

Primary Sponsor:
Senator Jonathon Acosta

Co-Sponsors:
Senators Andrew Dimitri, Lammis Vargas, Lori Urso, Peter Appollonio, Ryan Pearson

Official Legislative Record:
<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText26/SenateText26/S2759.pdf>.

Resolution Excerpt

“The residents of this state of Taíno heritage merit recognition...
The Taíno are the Indigenous people of Borikén and other Caribbean Islands...
Taíno-identifying residents of Rhode Island are part of a broader Taíno diaspora and contribute to the cultural diversity of the state.”

Resolution Action:
Passed Rhode Island Senate – March 3, 2026.

House Resolution H8221 (2026)

Title: House Resolution Recognizing the Culture and Heritage of Taíno Descendants in the State of Rhode Island

Sponsors:

Representatives Batista, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale, Kennedy, Ajello, Shallcross Smith, Fellela, Diaz, Fogarty

Official Legislative Record:

<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText26/HouseText26/H8221.pdf>.

Resolution Excerpt

“The residents of the State of Rhode Island of Taíno heritage represent a diverse cultural community in our state...

The Taíno people contributed historically and culturally to the rich and vibrant history of Rhode Island.”

2. Connecticut General Assembly

Connecticut House Resolution Recognizing Taíno Heritage

Description:

The Connecticut legislature passed a resolution acknowledging Taíno descendants and their cultural contributions within the state.

Supporting Coverage:

<https://www.ctpublic.org/news/2025-10-15/connecticut-is-recognizing-tainos-and-the-contributions-of-the-native-caribbean-people-tribal-leaders-say-its-the-first-state-to-do-so>.

Excerpt from Legislative Context

Connecticut lawmakers recognized the “culture and heritage of Taíno descendants in this state,” acknowledging their contributions to the cultural diversity of Connecticut.

3. New York State Proclamation

State Proclamation Recognizing Taíno Heritage (1999)

Jurisdiction:

New York State

Description:

New York issued an official proclamation acknowledging the presence and cultural contributions of Taíno descendants within the state.

Reference Source:

<https://www.ctpublic.org/news/2025-10-15/connecticut-is-recognizing-tainos-and-the-contributions-of-the-native-caribbean-people-tribal-leaders-say-its-the-first-state-to-do-so>.

Summary Language

The proclamation acknowledged:

Taíno cultural heritage

the presence of Taíno descendant communities

the role of Taíno organizations in preserving Indigenous Caribbean heritage in New York.

4. Massachusetts Legislative Commendations

Massachusetts Senate and Municipal Proclamations Recognizing Taíno Heritage

Massachusetts legislative and municipal bodies have issued commendations recognizing Taíno descendants and Caribbean Indigenous heritage during cultural observances.

Reference:

<https://www.elnuevodia.com/english/news/story/massachusetts-celebrates-the-heritage-of-taino-descendants-like-other-states-and-cities-in-the-us/>.

Summary

The Massachusetts Senate issued a proclamation recognizing Taíno descendants and their cultural heritage during Indigenous heritage commemorations.

Municipal acknowledgments have also occurred in cities with significant Caribbean diaspora populations.

5. United States Virgin Islands

Government Proclamations Recognizing Indigenous Caribbean Heritage

The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands has issued proclamations acknowledging Indigenous Caribbean heritage and Taíno cultural advocacy during Indigenous observances.

Reference:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maekiaphan_Phillips.

These proclamations recognize:

Indigenous Caribbean heritage

Taíno cultural preservation initiatives

community education and advocacy.

6. California Municipal Proclamations

Several California municipalities have issued proclamations recognizing Taíno heritage and Caribbean Indigenous cultural organizations through cultural heritage events and Indigenous observances.

Cities with documented proclamations or cultural acknowledgments include:

Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland

<https://chatgpt.com/c/69a9a23e-9114-832c-9760-ea035f9c99b3#:~:text=Official%20California%20Governor%E2%80%99s,Year%3A%0A2025.>

The document explicitly acknowledges:

“We celebrate the Taíno people, past, present, and their descendants...”

This is a formal proclamation issued by the Governor of California, which makes it a credible government reference confirming Taíno historical existence and descendants within the context of Indigenous recognition.

Jurisdiction:

State of California

Type:

Governor’s Proclamation

Year: 2025

7. Colorado Municipal Cultural Recognition

Colorado municipalities have acknowledged Taíno heritage through cultural events and proclamations associated with Indigenous Peoples' Day and Caribbean heritage celebrations.

Reference:

Aurora Colorado Taíno Recognition Reference

According to the referenced record:

The city issued a proclamation recognizing the Taíno people and establishing an annual Taíno Week honoring their culture and history.

Jurisdiction:

City of Aurora, Colorado

Type:

Municipal Proclamation

Recognition:

Taíno people and culture

Purpose:

Taíno cultural observance week

Note: The available record referencing this proclamation currently appears primarily through community documentation rather than a city-hosted PDF archive.

3. Colorado – Denver Recognition Reference

There is also documentation referencing Denver municipal recognition efforts related to Taíno remembrance.

Reference:

<https://chatgpt.com/c/69a9a23e-9114-832c-9760-ea035f9c99b3#:~:text=Denver%20Colorado%20Ta%C3%ADno%20Remembrance%20Day%20reference>

This reference indicates:

Denver issued recognition connected to a Taíno remembrance observance.

Jurisdiction:

City and County of Denver, Colorado

Type :

Municipal recognition / proclamation reference

Conclusion

The resolutions and proclamations listed above demonstrate that multiple U.S. jurisdictions have formally acknowledged:

the continued existence of Taíno descendants

the cultural contributions of Taíno communities

the importance of preserving Taíno heritage.

These precedents provide a clear legislative and governmental framework supporting the adoption of similar recognition measures by additional jurisdictions. Maryland has historically been a leading state in matters of Diversity, equity, and Inclusion. If Maryland adopts a similar recognition, it will become the **eighth U.S. jurisdiction to formally recognize the cultural heritage and continued presence of the Arawak Taíno people.**

POLICY RELEVANCE TO MARYLAND & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Maryland is home to a significant Caribbean diaspora population whose ancestry is historically connected to regions once inhabited by Arawak Taíno societies.

Estimates derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), supplemented by analysis from the Maryland State Data Center and Migration Policy Institute, indicate that Maryland is home to a substantial Caribbean diaspora population, including large communities of Puerto Rican, Jamaican, Haitian, Dominican, and Bahamian descent

- **113,000 Puerto Rican residents**
- **122,000 Jamaican residents**
- **44,000 Haitian residents**
- **10,000 Dominican residents**
- **2,700 Bahamian residents**

These communities collectively represent **approximately 294,000 Maryland residents with Caribbean ancestry.**

Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City, and Howard County contain some of the largest Caribbean populations within the state.

These communities contribute significantly to Maryland's:

- workforce
- small business sector
- educational institutions
- civic and cultural life

Recognizing Taíno Heritage Day would acknowledge the historical Indigenous roots of many Caribbean communities while promoting cultural awareness and educational programming throughout the state.

See attached chart

Caribbean Ancestry Population Estimates – Maryland

(Derived from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey – ACS)

Table 1: Maryland Caribbean Ancestry Population Estimates

Population Group	Estimated Population Range	Primary Census Source	ACS Table Reference	Notes on Methodology
Puerto Rican	~110,000+	U.S. Census Bureau	S0201 (Hispanic Origin)	Includes individuals identifying as Puerto Rican under Hispanic/Latino origin
Jamaican	~40,000 – 120,000	U.S. Census Bureau	B04006 (Ancestry)	Range reflects single + multiple ancestry reporting
Haitian	~20,000 – 45,000	U.S. Census Bureau	B04006 (Ancestry)	Includes both primary and secondary ancestry responses
Dominican	~10,000 – 30,000	U.S. Census Bureau	S0201 + B04006	Combination of Hispanic origin and ancestry reporting
Bahamian	~2,000 – 5,000	U.S. Census Bureau	B04006 (Ancestry)	Smaller population; primarily ancestry-based reporting

Table 2: Consolidated Caribbean Population Estimate – Maryland

Category	Population Estimate	Description
Conservative Estimate	~182,000	Based on lower-bound single ancestry/origin reporting
Expanded Estimate	~300,000+	Includes multi-ancestry reporting and broader ACS interpretation

Table 3: Data Sources & Technical References

Data Source	Description	Access Link
American Community Survey (ACS)	Primary federal dataset for population estimates	https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html
ACS Table B04006	Reports ancestry by population group	https://api.census.gov/data/2023/acs/acs1/groups/B04006.html
ACS Table S0201	Hispanic/Latino origin profiles (includes Puerto Rican population)	https://data.census.gov

Footnote: All population estimates are derived from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Figures represent aggregated estimates based on ancestry and Hispanic origin reporting and may include individuals identifying with multiple ancestries. As such, totals are presented as ranges rather than fixed counts.

WHY RECOGNITION IN MARYLAND MATTERS

Maryland is among the most culturally diverse states in the United States.

Its communities include residents with ancestral roots from across the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Within Maryland's Caribbean diaspora, many individuals maintain historical and cultural connections to the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the Arawak Taíno.

Despite these connections, Indigenous Caribbean history is rarely acknowledged within public education or official state recognitions.

Establishing Taíno Heritage Day would:

- promote historical accuracy regarding Indigenous Caribbean history
- recognize the cultural heritage of Caribbean communities within Maryland
- encourage educational programming in schools and cultural institutions
- celebrate the resilience and survival of Taíno descendants

Most importantly, such recognition would help correct longstanding historical misunderstandings that claimed the Taíno people had been completely eliminated following colonization.

Today, Taíno descendants continue to live, work, and contribute to communities throughout Maryland and the United States.

Recognizing Taíno Heritage Day would affirm this living heritage and ensure that future generations understand the enduring legacy of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples.

MARYLAND STATE SETS THE OVERDUE STANDARD

Maryland's Opportunity to Establish the National Standard for Arawak Taíno Recognition

Maryland now has the opportunity to do more than follow the growing national movement recognizing Taíno descendants. **Maryland can lead it.**

Across the United States, proclamations and resolutions have begun to affirm what history, culture, scholarship, and living communities have long known: the Arawak Taíno people were not erased. Their descendants remain present, organized, culturally active, and deeply connected to the Caribbean and the American story through Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Florida, and the wider diaspora.

New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other jurisdictions have taken meaningful steps to acknowledge Taíno heritage, cultural survival, and contributions. These actions are important, but Maryland can break the ceiling by advancing a more comprehensive state model.

Maryland can become the leading state in the nation by affirming Arawak Taíno Indigenous existence and presence while also connecting that recognition to education, cultural preservation, historical accuracy, diaspora inclusion, and public awareness. Rather than issuing a limited ceremonial statement, Maryland can establish a forward-looking framework that recognizes Arawak Taíno descendants as part of the state's living cultural fabric and encourages schools, cultural institutions, archives, museums, libraries, and community partners to preserve and teach this history.

This would place Maryland at the forefront of state-level leadership by acknowledging not only the historic suffering, survival, and resilience of the Arawak Taíno people, but also their ongoing contributions to Maryland's diversity, civic life, education, arts, public service, and community development.

Therefore The State of Maryland should affirm a Resolution, and Proclamation that:

1. Affirm the Arawak Taino people as a living Indigenous Caribbean people with descendants present in Maryland and across the United States.
2. Recognizes the historical connection between the Arawak Taíno people and U.S.-connected Caribbean territories, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

3. Acknowledges the legacy of colonization, forced assimilation, cultural erasure, and “paper genocide,” while affirming survival, resurgence, and identity.
4. Honors the contributions of Arawak Taíno descendants to Maryland’s cultural, educational, professional, military, public safety, artistic, and civic life.
5. Encourages educational institutions, libraries, museums, archives, and cultural agencies to include accurate information about Arawak Taíno history and contemporary presence.
6. Supports the preservation of Arawak Taíno language, oral history, cultural practices, ceremonies, art, agriculture, traditional knowledge, and community storytelling.
7. Recognizes the fourth Saturday of April as a Maryland observance honoring Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage, or, where formal day recognition is restricted, encourages annual statewide observance and public awareness activities during that period.
8. Invites continued partnership between the State of Maryland, local governments, cultural organizations, Caribbean communities, Indigenous organizations, educators, and Arawak Taíno descendants.

By adopting this broader approach, Maryland would not simply join the list of jurisdictions that have acknowledged Taíno people. Maryland would set the national standard for how states can responsibly, respectfully, and meaningfully affirm Arawak Taíno Indigenous existence, survival, and continued presence. ***

SCHOLARLY REFERENCES

“We also show that the native components in some modern Caribbean genomes are closely related to the ancient Taino, suggesting that indigenous ancestry in the region has survived through the present day...”

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5877975/>

“Now we have this evidence to show that we weren’t extinct, we just mixed, and we’re still around,” said Dr. Aviles.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/23/science/dna-caribbean-islands.html>

“Taíno movement, a declaration of Native survival through *mestizaje* (genetic and cultural mixing over time), reclamation and revival”

<https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/taino-survival-back-history>

"Taíno Phenomena" and how concepts of identity have been framed, advocating for new approaches to Caribbean indigenous histories that center on cultural continuity...”

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/ethnohistory/article-abstract/61/3/467/9176/The-Taíno-Phenomena-Concepts-and-Terms?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

“Their archaeological excavations at the En Bas Saline site in Haiti provide striking evidence of Taíno resistance and adaptation. Their research documents how Taíno social dynamics, gender roles, and class structures persisted with remarkable resilience long after European contact.”

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-antiquity/article/abs/reconsidering-taino-social-dynamics-after-spanish-conquest-gender-and-class-in-culture-contact-studies/E45B974112D69A4D8232BC78C94BED95>

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PUBLIC ENDORSEMENTS

This initiative has received expressions of support from community leaders, cultural advocates, educators, and residents across Maryland and beyond who recognize the importance of promoting historical awareness regarding Indigenous Caribbean heritage.

Support for this initiative reflects a growing understanding that the history of the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean should be represented accurately within educational and cultural institutions.

A continuously growing record of signatures and statements of support has been compiled as part of this initiative. These supporters include:

- community leaders
- cultural educators
- nonprofit organizations
- scholars and researchers
- Caribbean heritage advocates
- residents of Maryland and other states

These individuals and organizations share a commitment to ensuring that the historical legacy of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the Arawak Taíno is recognized and preserved.

A record of supporters and signatories is maintained in the accompanying **Petition for Resolution Proclamation of Arawak Taíno People signature record**, included within the appendices of this packet.

Several signatories include individuals who hold positions of leadership within community organizations and cultural institutions. Their support reflects a broad interest in promoting educational awareness regarding Indigenous Caribbean heritage.

Community engagement remains central to this effort, and the list of supporters continues to grow as more individuals learn about the initiative and its educational purpose.

Coalition of Support for the Maryland Arawak Taíno Recognition Initiative

The attached link provides access to our ongoing record of public support for this initiative. This document reflects the growing number of Maryland residents, community leaders, professionals, and international supporters who have expressed their support for the effort to affirm recognition of the Arawak Taíno people. The list continues to expand daily as additional supporters add their voices.

<C:\Users\laboy\OneDrive\Desktop\Petition for Resolution Proclamation of Arawak Taino People.xlsx>

Within the document, individuals highlighted in gold represent notable supporters, including respected community leaders, elected officials, accomplished professionals, and globally recognized figures. Among them are Dr. Joyce Payne, Founder of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund; Laurie-Anne Sayles; Olympic Gold Medalist Thea LaFond, who has publicly affirmed her ancestral connection to the Arawak Indigenous people; former attorney in the Obama Administration; Dr. Jenelle Wyatt of Johns Hopkins Medicine; and Susan Jenkins, CEO of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, among many other distinguished community leaders.

We are also currently awaiting formal letters of support from several additional community and government leaders who have already expressed verbal support, including Marc Elrich, Marc Anthony Robles of the Maryland Democratic Central Committee, and Kristin Mink, along with other local and regional leaders.

As this coalition of support continues to grow, we remain hopeful to also receive your support and guidance on this important initiative—one that reflects Maryland's ongoing commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and the truthful recognition of Indigenous heritage.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO

COUNCILMEMBER, AT-LARGE

CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE

PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor, State of Maryland
State House
100 State Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Moore:

I write to express my strong support for a State Resolution recognizing the Arawak Taíno as a living Indigenous people with descendants residing in Maryland, and designating the fourth Saturday in April as “Arawak Taíno Heritage Day”. I respectfully urge you, the Maryland General Assembly, and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to advance this resolution.

This request comes directly from members of our community. Denyzio Laboy, a Maryland resident and founder of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), has submitted a formal petition documenting the historical significance and ongoing presence of Taíno descendants throughout our state. As someone who has dedicated my career to ensuring that every voice in our community is heard, I find this petition compelling and worthy of state action.

Montgomery County is home to over 23,000 residents of Puerto Rican descent, more than 18,000 of Jamaican ancestry, and thousands more from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Bahamas—communities with deep ancestral connections to the Taíno people. Across Maryland, U.S. Census data shows nearly 70,000 Puerto Ricans and Virgin Islanders, with the total Caribbean-descended population doubling that figure. These are our neighbors, educators, healthcare workers, small business owners, and public servants who contribute to the vitality of our state every day.

The Taíno were the first Indigenous peoples encountered by European explorers in 1492. While their population was devastated by colonization, Taíno descendants have maintained their cultural heritage through language revitalization, oral traditions, and organized tribal communities. States and localities across the nation—including Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, New York, Colorado, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have formally recognized Taíno heritage and contributions. Maryland, as the first state to establish a Commission on Caribbean Affairs has long demonstrated leadership on these issues.

This resolution would continue that proud tradition.

Montgomery County has taken meaningful steps to honor Indigenous peoples. In 2020, our The County Council unanimously voted to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day, acknowledging that the story of this nation has too often been misrepresented, and that it is time to correct that narrative. This proposed state resolution reflects those same values—not erasing history, but elevating voices that have been silenced for too long.

I want to be clear: this resolution is a cultural recognition that does not confer tribal status, sovereignty, or land claims. It is a long-overdue acknowledgment that Taíno descendants are part of the fabric of Maryland, that their heritage deserves respect and visibility, and that their contributions to our communities should be celebrated.

Governor Moore, your leadership has consistently emphasized that Maryland is a state where everyone belongs. Recognizing the Arawak Taíno people advances that vision by honoring a community whose roots in this hemisphere predate European arrival and whose descendants continue to enrich our state today.

I urge you to support this resolution and work with the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to bring it forward. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if I can be of any assistance in this effort.

With respect and gratitude,



Will Jawando
Chair, Education & Culture Committee
Councilmember At-Large
Montgomery County Council

Cc:

E. Keith Colston, Executive Director, Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs
Denyzio Laboy, Taino American Indigenous National Organization



BLACKROCK CENTER FOR THE ARTS

June 17, 2026

Governor Wes Moore
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Speaker Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for Maryland Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People

Dear Governor Moore and Speaker Peña-Melnyk,

On behalf of BlackRock Center for the Arts, I am pleased to offer our support for the efforts of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.) to secure official Maryland recognition of the Arawak Taíno People through a State Resolution and Proclamation.

For more than two decades, BlackRock Center for the Arts has served as a cultural gathering place for Montgomery County, bringing people together through artistic experiences that foster connection, understanding, and community pride. As the civic and creative heart of Germantown, we believe communities are strengthened when people have opportunities to share their stories, celebrate their traditions, and see their histories reflected within the broader cultural landscape.

The Arawak Taíno people represent a rich Indigenous heritage whose descendants continue to contribute to the cultural vitality of Maryland and communities throughout the Caribbean diaspora. Their history, resilience, and ongoing commitment to preserving and sharing their traditions are an important part of the diverse tapestry of experiences that shape our state.

At BlackRock, we regularly witness the power of cultural representation and storytelling. When individuals and communities see their identities, histories, and contributions acknowledged and valued, it creates opportunities for belonging, dialogue, learning, and deeper community connection. We have been encouraged by the work of T.A.I.N.O. to promote cultural awareness, share Indigenous knowledge and traditions, and create opportunities for education and understanding across generations.

Official recognition of the Arawak Taíno People would represent a meaningful affirmation of Maryland's commitment to honoring the many communities that contribute to our shared cultural life. Such recognition acknowledges not only historical significance, but also the living traditions, perspectives, and contributions of Taíno descendants who continue to enrich our communities today.

Recognition would also support opportunities for cultural exchange and public education, helping Maryland residents gain a deeper understanding of the Indigenous histories and contemporary experiences that are part of our state's story.



By elevating these voices and perspectives, Maryland can continue to foster a culture of respect, learning, and engagement across communities.

As an organization dedicated to strengthening communities through arts, culture, and education, BlackRock Center for the Arts respectfully encourages your support of this initiative. We believe Maryland's cultural vitality is strengthened when all communities have the opportunity to share their stories, traditions, and perspectives. Recognizing the Arawak Taíno People would be a meaningful step toward ensuring that Maryland's cultural narrative reflects the full diversity of those who call our state home.

Thank you for your leadership and your consideration of this important effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Hecklinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Katie Hecklinger
Chief Executive Officer
BlackRock Center for the Arts
Germantown, Maryland

Hon. Wes Moore
Governor
Hon. Aruna K. Miller
Lt. Governor
Elaine Rice Bachmann
State Archivist and
Commissioner of Land Patents
Mark Letzer
Chairman, Maryland Commission
on Artistic Property



Hall of Records Commission:
Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Katie Caljean
Atif Chaundry, J.D.
Ronald Daniels, L.L.M., J.D.
Nora Demleitner, L.L.M., J.D.
Hon. Dereck E. Davis
Hon. William C. Ferguson IV
Hon. Brooke E. Lierman
Jay A. Perman, M.D.
Hon. Samuel I. Rosenberg
David Wilson, Ed.D.

March, 17th, 2026

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for a State Resolution recognizing the Arawak Taíno as Indigenous people with descendants residing in Maryland and designating the fourth Saturday in April as "Arawak Taíno Heritage Day." I respectfully urge you, the Maryland General Assembly, and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to advance this resolution.

I make this request as a member of the Maryland State Archives executive leadership team. Through our mandate to ensure that all Marylanders are represented in our historical record, we support efforts such as those advanced by Mr. Laboy. This proposed resolution reflects not the erasure of history, but the elevation of voices that have been silenced for far too long.

Mr. Laboy, a Maryland resident and founder of the Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), recently contributed his voice to an oral history interview documenting the historical significance and ongoing presence of Taíno descendants throughout our state. As an agency dedicated to preserving and supporting the history of every Marylander, I believe this effort deserves our support.

Taíno descendants have persevered as a people, and this resolution would not only acknowledge their heritage but also recognize the contributions that enrich our communities and strengthen the fabric of Maryland.

I respectfully urge you to support this resolution and to work with the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to bring it forward.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,

Corey Lewis
Assistant State Archivist
Maryland State Archives
350 Rowe Blvd
Annapolis, Md 21401
410-260-6450



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

SHEBRA EVANS

COUNCILMEMBER – At Large

EDUCATION & CULTURE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS &
FISCAL POLICY

June 22, 2026

Governor Wes Moore
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Speaker Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for Maryland Resolution and Proclamation Recognizing the Arawak Taíno People

Dear Governor Moore and Speaker Peña-Melnyk,

I am writing to express my strong support for the efforts of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.) to secure a Maryland State Resolution and Proclamation recognizing the Arawak Taíno People.

Throughout my years of public service, I have remained committed to advancing equity, educational opportunity, inclusion, and ensuring that all communities see themselves reflected in the stories we tell, the history we teach, and the policies we pursue. Recognition matters because representation matters. When communities are acknowledged, respected, and included, we create a stronger and more unified Maryland.

The story of the Arawak Taíno People is one that deserves greater visibility and understanding. Despite centuries of misconceptions that suggested the Taíno people disappeared, Taíno descendants continue to preserve their culture, traditions, identity, and heritage throughout the Caribbean and within communities here in Maryland. Their continued resilience and commitment to cultural preservation represent values that should be recognized and celebrated.

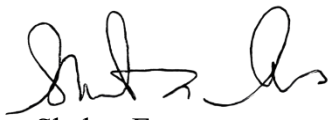
I believe it is critically important that future generations have access to a more complete and inclusive understanding of history. Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People provides an opportunity to acknowledge an Indigenous community whose contributions have often been overlooked despite their enduring presence and influence.

At a time when many communities continue to seek greater understanding, visibility, and representation, Maryland has an opportunity to lead by demonstrating that every community's story matters. Official recognition of the Arawak Taíno People through a State Resolution and Proclamation would affirm Maryland's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and historical truth.

I respectfully encourage your offices to support this important initiative and work alongside community leaders and stakeholders to advance formal recognition of the Arawak Taíno People in Maryland.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shebra Evans', with a stylized, cursive script.

Shebra Evans
Councilmember



June 12, 2026

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates

Dear Governor Moore and Speaker Peña-Melnyk:

I am writing to express my strong support for the efforts of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.) and its Founder and Executive Director, Denyzio Laboy, to establish official recognition of the fourth Saturday in April as Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day in the State of Maryland.

Throughout my public service, I have remained committed to advancing equity, inclusion, educational opportunity, community engagement, and ensuring that all residents feel seen, valued, and represented. I believe that recognizing and honoring the histories, cultures, and contributions of all communities strengthens our state and helps build a more informed and inclusive future for generations to come. The Arawak Taíno people represent an important part of the Indigenous history of the Caribbean and the Americas. While many people are familiar with the historical presence of the Taíno people, fewer understand that Taíno descendants continue to live, work, raise families, and contribute to communities throughout Maryland and across the United States. Their story is not simply one of history; it is one of resilience, survival, cultural preservation, and continued contribution.

I have had the opportunity to learn more about the work being carried out by T.A.I.N.O. and have been impressed by the organization's commitment to education, cultural awareness, community outreach, youth engagement, and historical preservation. Their efforts help create opportunities for Maryland residents to learn about an often-overlooked part of our shared history while fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Caribbean cultures.

As someone who believes deeply in the importance of uplifting underrepresented voices and ensuring that diverse communities receive meaningful recognition, I view this proposed designation as an opportunity to celebrate cultural heritage while promoting education and awareness. An annual Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day would provide Maryland schools, community organizations, local



governments, and residents with an opportunity to engage in learning, dialogue, and celebration centered on the history, traditions, and enduring legacy of the Arawak Taíno people.

I also recognize the importance of preserving cultural identity for future generations. When communities see their histories acknowledged and respected, it strengthens civic engagement, fosters pride, and reinforces the values of inclusion and belonging that make Maryland a stronger and more vibrant state.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage your thoughtful consideration of this initiative and the opportunity it presents to recognize the rich heritage and ongoing contributions of Arawak Taíno descendants living throughout Maryland and beyond.

Warm regards,

Kristin Mink

Montgomery County Council, District 5



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Shawn Ellis
Director

June 16, 2026

Mr. Denyzio Laboy
Founder & Executive Director
T.A.I.N.O. – Taino American Indigenous National Organization
18417 Tapwood Rd
Boys, MD. 20841

RE: Support for Statewide Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People and Establishment of Arawak Taíno Heritage Day

The Honorable Governor of Maryland and Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Caribbean Advisory Group (CAAG) and the Montgomery County Caribbean Community Liaison, it is our pleasure to write this letter in support of the resolution submitted by the organization Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O) seeking formal recognition and acknowledgment by the State of Maryland regarding the history, culture, rights, and contributions of the Taino and Arawak peoples from the Caribbean.

The Indigenous Taino and Arawak community of Montgomery County, under the leadership of its founder and executive director, Denyzio Laboy, plays an essential role in shaping the history and identity of our state. Their traditions and enduring cultural heritage deserve recognition, respect, and preservation for future generations.

The proposed resolution represents an important opportunity for the State of Maryland to affirm its commitment to truth, historical understanding, and collaboration with Indigenous ancestors. It acknowledges the significance of Indigenous peoples while promoting education, cultural preservation, equity, and reconciliation. We respectfully urge the State of Maryland to adopt this resolution.



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Shawn Ellis
Director

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Respectfully,

Laurie Williams- CAAG Chair & Rodrigue Vital- Caribbean Community Liaison



SANDY SPRING SLAVE MUSEUM & AFRICAN ART GALLERY

18524 Brooke Road
Sandy Spring, Maryland 20860

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Speaker Pro Tempore, Maryland House of Delegates

Members of the Maryland General Assembly

Dear Governor Moore, Speaker Pro Tempore Peña-Melnyk, and Honorable Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the Sandy Spring Slave Museum & African Art Gallery, I write to express our strong support for the proposed Maryland State Resolution recognizing the enduring history, cultural contributions, and continued presence of the Arawak Taíno people in our state, as well as the accompanying proclamation establishing the fourth Saturday of April as **Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day**.

For nearly four decades, the Sandy Spring Slave Museum has remained committed to preserving historical truth, amplifying voices too often omitted from traditional narratives, and fostering dialogue that promotes understanding across cultures. Our mission has always recognized that an honest accounting of history requires acknowledging all peoples whose stories have shaped our communities and our nation.

The story of the Arawak Taíno people is one of resilience, survival, and perseverance. Although many historical accounts incorrectly portrayed the Taíno as a people who disappeared, contemporary scholarship and the lived experiences of Taíno descendants clearly demonstrate otherwise. Their culture, traditions, language, and descendants continue to enrich communities throughout the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Florida, and here in Maryland.

As educators and stewards of history, we understand that recognition is not about rewriting history, it is about correcting omissions and ensuring that future generations inherit a fuller, more accurate understanding of our shared past. Public recognition affirms that the histories of Indigenous peoples are not confined to museums or textbooks but remain living chapters in Maryland's diverse cultural landscape.

The work being led by T.A.I.N.O. (Taíno American Indigenous National Organization) represents an important effort to educate the public, preserve cultural heritage, and encourage civic engagement through historical awareness. Their commitment to community education, cultural preservation, and partnerships with public institutions reflects the very principles that museums strive to advance every day.



Maryland has distinguished itself as a state willing to confront history honestly while embracing the diversity that strengthens our communities. Supporting this Resolution and Proclamation would continue that proud tradition by recognizing an Indigenous people whose legacy remains an important part of our collective human story.

The Sandy Spring Slave Museum respectfully encourages the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to lend their support to this initiative. Doing so will further demonstrate Maryland's commitment to historical accuracy, educational opportunity, cultural inclusion, and the preservation of the many communities whose contributions have shaped our state.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your continued leadership in advancing initiatives that honor the richness and diversity of Maryland's history.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy E. Boddy".

Co-Director
Sandy Spring Slave Museum & African Art Gallery
Sandy Spring, Maryland

<https://www.sandyspringslavemuseum.org>



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 17, 2026

To: Honorable Governor Wes Moore AND Keith Colston/ Administrative Director -MD
Department of Indian Affairs

Statement of Support:

I, Delegate Greg Wims, wholeheartedly support the ongoing efforts and initiative led by Mr. Denyzio Laboy, Founder of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), in petitioning for a Maryland State Resolution and Proclamation to formally acknowledge the continued existence of the Arawak Taíno Indigenous people and to establish the fourth Saturday in April as “Arawak Taíno Heritage Day.”

The Arawak Taíno people were among the first Indigenous communities encountered by European colonizers in the Americas and have made enduring cultural and linguistic contributions that continue to influence our world today evident in everyday words such as hammock, hurricane, canoe, and tobacco.

This initiative reflects Maryland’s shared values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and honors the living descendants of the Arawak Taíno who continue to preserve and celebrate their heritage. Recognizing “Arawak Taíno Heritage Day” would serve as an important educational and cultural milestone for our state and a meaningful step toward honoring Indigenous resilience and identity.

I fully support such a historic and worthwhile initiative as well as commend Mr. Laboy and T.A.I.N.O. for their leadership, advocacy, and dedication to cultural preservation and unity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Wims".

Delegate Greg Wims
District 39 (Montgomery County)



FREDERICK

MARYLAND

June 23, 2026

Governor Wes Moore
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Speaker Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Moore and Speaker Peña-Melnyk,

As a public servant who has long advocated for equity, inclusion, belonging, and the recognition of historically underrepresented communities, I write today to express my strong support for the efforts of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.) to secure official Maryland recognition of the Arawak Taíno People through a State Resolution and Proclamation.

Throughout my service to the residents of Frederick and the State of Maryland, I have worked to advance initiatives that ensure every community sees itself reflected in our institutions, our policies, and our shared understanding of history. The pursuit of equity requires more than words; it requires action—action that acknowledges the contributions, experiences, and identities of those whose stories have too often been overlooked.

The Arawak Taíno People are among those communities.

For generations, misconceptions have perpetuated the false narrative that the Taíno people disappeared from history. Yet today, Taíno descendants continue to preserve and celebrate their culture, traditions, language, and identity throughout the Caribbean and across the United States, including here in Maryland. Their continued presence is a testament to resilience, perseverance, and the enduring strength of Indigenous communities.

The work led by T.A.I.N.O., under the leadership of Founder and Executive Director Denyzio Laboy, reflects many of the same principles that guide my public service: education, community engagement, cultural preservation, youth empowerment, and the creation of opportunities for all people to be seen, heard, and valued. Through public awareness campaigns, educational programming, cultural initiatives, oral history preservation, and civic engagement efforts, T.A.I.N.O. is helping ensure that future generations have access to a more complete and truthful understanding of our shared history.

At a time when many communities across our nation continue to grapple with division, exclusion, and the erasure of marginalized voices, Maryland has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by affirming a simple but powerful truth: Indigenous peoples are not relics of the past. They remain vibrant contributors to our communities, our culture, and our future.

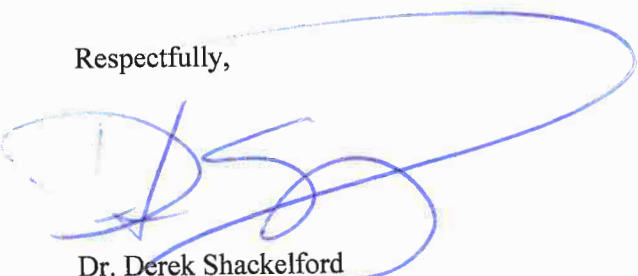
Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People through a Maryland Resolution and Proclamation would represent more than a symbolic gesture. It would demonstrate Maryland's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and historical accuracy. It would acknowledge the contributions of Indigenous peoples whose legacy continues to shape the Caribbean diaspora and enrich the cultural fabric of our state.

As Maryland continues to lead on issues of equity and belonging, I respectfully encourage your offices to support this initiative and work alongside T.A.I.N.O., community stakeholders, and legislative partners to advance formal recognition of the Arawak Taíno People.

Our commitment to equity is measured not only by the communities we celebrate today, but also by our willingness to recognize those whose stories have too often been left untold. Supporting this Resolution and Proclamation is an opportunity to honor that commitment and ensure that Indigenous voices remain visible, respected, and included in Maryland's story.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this important request.

Respectfully,



Dr. Derek Shackelford
City Council Member – At-Large



TOWN OF
Poolesville
MARYLAND

June 20, 2026

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor, State of Maryland

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee

Dear Governor Moore and Chair Peña-Melnyk:

I write in strong support of the effort to advance a Maryland State Resolution and Proclamation recognizing the Arawak Taíno people and affirming Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day in Maryland.

As a municipal leader in Montgomery County, I believe good public policy must be intentional, inclusive, and rooted in the full truth of the communities we serve. Maryland is home to families from Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and throughout the Caribbean—many of whom carry Arawak Taíno ancestry, culture, memory, and identity. Their story is not separate from Maryland's story; it is part of the larger fabric of our state.

This recognition would not create a tribal status or legal sovereignty claim. Rather, it would provide long-overdue public acknowledgment of a people whose history is too often erased, while honoring the living descendants who continue to contribute to Maryland through education, service, business, culture, and civic life.

My own public service has focused on listening to community voices, strengthening education, supporting local families and businesses, promoting sustainability, and ensuring that our government recognizes all residents with dignity. Supporting this resolution is consistent with those values.

I respectfully urge your support for this important recognition. Maryland has an opportunity to lead with truth, inclusion, and respect by affirming that the Arawak Taíno people are still here, still contributing, and still deserving of acknowledgment.

Please feel free to contact me if you need further information or additional details regarding my support.

Sincerely,

Ed Reed

Edward Reed
Vice President, Town of Poolesville Commissioner
Town of Poolesville
Phone: 301-335-6689 Email: EReed@poolesvillemd.gov



March 9, 2026

Dear Governor Moore,

I write to express my strong support for a State Resolution recognizing the Arawak Taíno as a living Indigenous people with descendants residing in Maryland and designating the fourth Saturday in April as “Arawak Taíno Heritage Day.” I respectfully urge you, the Maryland General Assembly, and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to advance this resolution.

I make this request not only as a Maryland resident, but as a Mexican American who understands firsthand how Indigenous identity across the Americas has been suppressed, denied, or rendered invisible. Many of us—whether from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, or the U.S. Southwest—carry ancestry from nations that colonization tried to erase. In my own family, we are believed to descend from the Chichimeca peoples, one of the many Indigenous nations that still live within the cultural fabric of Mexico and the borderlands. The struggle for recognition is real, and it is shared.

This resolution comes directly from members of our community. Denyzio Laboy, a Maryland resident and founder of the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.), has submitted a formal petition documenting the historical significance and ongoing presence of Taíno descendants throughout our state. As someone who believes deeply in uplifting communities whose histories have been marginalized, I find this petition compelling and worthy of state action.

Montgomery County is home to over 23,000 residents of Puerto Rican descent, more than 18,000 of Jamaican ancestry, and thousands more from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Bahamas—communities with deep ancestral connections to the Taíno people. Across Maryland, U.S. Census data shows nearly 70,000 Puerto Ricans and Virgin Islanders, with the total Caribbean-descended population far exceeding that number. These are our neighbors, educators, healthcare workers, small business owners, and public servants who strengthen our state every day.

The Taíno were the first Indigenous peoples encountered by Europeans in 1492. Although colonization devastated their population, Taíno descendants have preserved their cultural heritage through language revitalization, oral traditions, and organized tribal communities. States and localities across the nation—including Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, New York, Colorado, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—have already taken steps to formally recognize Taíno heritage and contributions. Maryland, as the first state to establish a Commission on Caribbean Affairs, has long demonstrated leadership in honoring the histories of Caribbean peoples. This resolution continues that tradition.

Montgomery County has already taken meaningful steps to honor Indigenous peoples. In 2020, the County Council unanimously voted to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day, acknowledging that the story of this nation has too often been misrepresented and that it is time to correct that narrative. This proposed state resolution reflects those same values—not rewriting history but restoring voices that have been silenced.

I want to be clear: this resolution is a cultural recognition. It does not confer tribal status, sovereignty, or land claims. It is simply an overdue acknowledgment that Taíno descendants are part of Maryland's living Indigenous tapestry, that their heritage deserves respect and visibility, and that their contributions enrich our communities.

Governor Moore, your leadership has consistently emphasized that Maryland is a state where everyone belongs. Recognizing the Arawak Taíno people advances that vision by honoring a community whose roots in this hemisphere predate European arrival and whose descendants continue to contribute to our state today.

I urge you to support this resolution and work with the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs to bring it forward. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if I can be of any assistance in this effort.

With Respect and Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Anthony Robles". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Marc Anthony Robles

Vice President of the Latino Democratic Club

Chair of Outreach & Youth Engagement for MCDCC (D39)



Statement of Support

Date: 2026-03-17

Hannah Sholder

Founder & Deputy Director

Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming (CKC Farming)

Dear **Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk** / Speaker of the House Maryland General Assembly

Wes Moore / Maryland state Governor

E. Keith Colston / Administrative Director of Maryland Dept. of Indian Affairs

As someone whose work centers on land preservation, community stewardship, and honoring the histories that shape our communities, I strongly support the effort to formally recognize the enduring presence and heritage of the Arawak Taíno people through a Resolution Proclamation in the State of Maryland. Through my work with the Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming, I have come to understand that land is not only a resource for cultivation, but also a living archive of cultural memory and identity. Recognizing Indigenous histories connected to land strengthens our collective understanding of place, heritage, and responsibility.

I commend the work of the **Taino American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.)** and its founder, Denyzio Laboy, for advancing awareness and education about the Taíno people and their continuing cultural presence. Supporting this Resolution Proclamation would affirm Maryland's commitment to historical truth, cultural inclusion, and the recognition of Indigenous communities whose stories remain deeply connected to land, heritage, and the broader narrative of the Americas. I respectfully encourage your leadership in supporting this important effort.

Hannah Sholder

Hannah Sholder

Founder / Deputy Director

Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming (CKC Farming)



Thea LaFond-Gadson
2024 Olympic Gold Medalist
Silver Spring Md/ Montgomery County

I, Thea LaFond-Gadson, express my support for the Maryland State Resolution recognizing the Arawak Taíno Indigenous People and establishing the fourth Saturday in April as 'Arawak Taíno Heritage Day.' This support affirms my commitment to preserving cultural truth, advancing Indigenous representation, and uplifting the Arawak Taíno community.

Thea LaFond

December 19th, 2025

Learn more About Thea:

<https://caribbeanamericanheritageawards.com/thea-la-fond/>

<https://www.instagram.com/thealafond/?hl=en>

<https://www.ncaa.org/news/2024/10/11/olympics-thea-lafond-gadson-marylands-golden-girl.aspx>

chrome-
extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw/Resources/Fil
es/WLB/2025/Keynote%20panel.pdf

<https://www.olympics.com/en/athletes/thea-lafond>



Prabu Selvam, MD
Candidate for Montgomery County Council At-Large
Montgomery County, Maryland

Date: 15 April 2026

The Honorable Governor Wes Moore
State of Maryland

Mr. E. Keith Colston
Administrative Director
Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs

Dear Governor Moore and Mr. Colston,

I write to respectfully express my support for the effort to recognize and affirm the history and continued presence of the Arawak Taíno people through a Resolution Proclamation within the State of Maryland.

Montgomery County and the State of Maryland are strengthened by the extraordinary diversity of our communities. Our shared commitment to inclusion, equity, and historical truth requires that we recognize the voices, cultures, and histories of Indigenous peoples whose contributions continue to shape our society. Efforts that acknowledge and uplift Indigenous heritage are consistent with the values of fairness, education, and cultural understanding that define our state.

As someone who was born and raised in Montgomery County by immigrant parents who dedicated their careers to federal public service, I have long believed that government must ensure every community has the opportunity to be seen, heard, and respected. Throughout my career—as a U.S. Air Force officer, emergency physician, and humanitarian worker—I have witnessed the importance of recognizing the dignity and heritage of all people. These experiences reinforce my belief that government should actively support initiatives that elevate historically underrepresented communities.

The proposed recognition of the Arawak Taíno people goes beyond symbolism. It provides an opportunity to educate our communities, promote cultural awareness, and ensure that the contributions and legacy of Indigenous Caribbean peoples are acknowledged within the broader narrative of American and Maryland history.

I commend the advocates and community leaders working to advance this effort, and I respectfully encourage the State of Maryland to give thoughtful consideration to this Resolution Proclamation.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to building a state where every community's heritage is recognized and valued.

Respectfully,

Prabu Selvam, MD
Candidate for Montgomery County Council At-Large
Montgomery County, Maryland

CLOSING STATEMENT

This proposal is submitted as an effort to promote historical awareness, cultural recognition, and educational engagement regarding the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the **Arawak Taíno**.

The history of the Taíno people represents one of the earliest chapters in the story of the Americas. Their societies flourished throughout the Caribbean prior to European contact and played a foundational role in shaping the cultural and linguistic heritage of the region.

For generations, historical narratives often claimed that the Taíno population had been eliminated following European colonization. These narratives frequently stated that the Taíno people had been “**wiped off the face of the earth.**”

Modern scholarship has corrected this misunderstanding.

Today, archaeological research, anthropological scholarship, and genetic evidence confirm that Taíno descendants survived and continue to live throughout the Caribbean diaspora and across the United States.

Within Maryland, communities with Caribbean ancestry represent a vibrant and growing part of the state’s cultural landscape. Many Maryland residents trace their heritage to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and The Bahamas—regions historically connected to Indigenous Caribbean societies.

Acknowledging and affirming the truth of our existence, and recognizing **Taíno Heritage Day** would serve as an opportunity to promote education, cultural awareness, and historical understanding while celebrating the enduring legacy of Indigenous Caribbean heritage.

Such recognition would not create legal obligations or confer tribal status. Rather, it would serve as a symbolic acknowledgment that encourages educational initiatives and cultural engagement.

Through this recognition, Maryland would affirm its commitment to inclusive history and cultural awareness while joining other jurisdictions that have recognized the continued presence of Taíno descendants.

Most importantly, such recognition would ensure that future generations understand that the history of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples did not end with colonization.

The Taíno people remain part of the living cultural fabric of the Americas today.

Respectfully submitted,

Denyzio Laboy

Denyzio Laboy

Resident, Citizen, and Community Advocate

Boys, Maryland

Founder – Taíno American Indigenous National Organization (T.A.I.N.O.)

APPENDIX A

SUPPORT LETTERS AND SIGNATURE DOCUMENTATION

The following appendix provides documentation of community support for the initiative to recognize the Arawak Taíno people and establish Taíno Heritage Day in Maryland.

Support has been expressed through a combination of:

- signed petitions
- written statements of support
- endorsements from community leaders
- letters submitted by cultural organizations and educators

These documents demonstrate community interest in promoting educational awareness regarding Indigenous Caribbean heritage.

Statement of Support Template

Name:

Title:

Organization / Affiliation:

City / County:

Statement:

"I acknowledge and support the initiative led by Denyzio Laboy to promote recognition of the Indigenous Caribbean peoples known as the Arawak Taíno and to encourage the State of Maryland to establish Taíno Heritage Day.

Recognizing the historical legacy and cultural contributions of Indigenous Caribbean communities is consistent with Maryland's values of diversity, inclusion, and educational awareness. I encourage Maryland leaders to support this initiative and promote greater understanding of Indigenous Caribbean history."

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX B

MARYLAND CARIBBEAN ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHICS

This appendix provides an overview of Maryland's population by ancestry group for individuals identifying with Puerto Rican, Dominican, Jamaican, Haitian, and Bahamian heritage.

These data are based on the **U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS)** and illustrate the demographic presence of Caribbean-origin communities throughout the State of Maryland.

These populations maintain historical and cultural connections to regions historically inhabited by Indigenous Caribbean peoples, including the Arawak Taino.

Estimated Caribbean-Origin Population in Maryland

Puerto Rican: **113,710**

Dominican: **10,380**

Jamaican: **122,134**

Haitian: **44,075**

Bahamian: **2,763**

Total Estimated Caribbean-Origin Population in Maryland:

Approximately 293,062 residents

These populations are concentrated in counties including:

- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Howard County
- Anne Arundel County

Montgomery County alone contains more than **50,000 residents of Caribbean ancestry**, reflecting the strong presence of Caribbean communities within the region.

These communities contribute significantly to Maryland's cultural diversity, economic vitality, and civic engagement.

APPENDIX C

PROPOSED MARYLAND HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

A House Joint Resolution Concerning

Recognition of the Arawak Taíno People and Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage

FOR the purpose of recognizing the enduring history, cultural heritage, resilience, and continuing presence of the Arawak Taíno people; acknowledging the contributions of Arawak Taíno descendants to the State of Maryland and the Nation; encouraging historical accuracy, cultural preservation, and public education regarding the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean; encouraging annual statewide observance of Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage on the fourth Saturday of April; and generally relating to the recognition of the Arawak Taíno people.

WHEREAS,

The Arawak Taíno people are the Indigenous Peoples of the Greater Antilles and portions of the Lucayan Archipelago, including the islands historically known as Borikén (Puerto Rico), Ayiti and Quisqueya (Hispaniola), Xaymaca (Jamaica), Cuba, the Bahamas, and neighboring Caribbean regions; and

WHEREAS,

The Arawak Taíno people established highly organized societies with rich traditions of governance, agriculture, navigation, artistry, spirituality, environmental stewardship, and commerce for centuries prior to European contact; and

WHEREAS,

The Arawak Taíno people were among the first Indigenous Peoples encountered during Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage, forever changing the history of the Caribbean and the Americas; and

WHEREAS,

Modern historical scholarship, archaeology, genealogy, oral history, and the continued existence of organized Arawak Taíno communities have firmly established that the Arawak Taíno people did not disappear but survived and continue to preserve their cultural identity, traditions, and ancestral heritage; and

WHEREAS,

The resilience of the Arawak Taíno people stands as a testament to their perseverance through centuries of colonization, displacement, disease, forced labor, assimilation, and cultural suppression while maintaining enduring family lineages, traditions, and cultural practices; and

WHEREAS,

The State of Maryland is home to residents of Arawak Taíno descent whose contributions to public service, education, military service, law enforcement, healthcare, business, science, technology, arts, culture, community leadership, and civic engagement continue to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the State; and

WHEREAS,

Recognizing the Arawak Taíno people promotes historical accuracy, encourages greater understanding of the Indigenous history of the Caribbean, and honors the continuing contributions of Arawak Taíno descendants throughout Maryland and the United States; and

WHEREAS,

The Maryland General Assembly recognizes that preserving Indigenous history and acknowledging living descendant communities enriches public education, promotes cultural understanding, and reflects Maryland's longstanding commitment to diversity, inclusion, historical integrity, and mutual respect; and

WHEREAS,

Communities throughout the United States have increasingly acknowledged the history, resilience, and continuing existence of the Arawak Taíno people through legislative actions and executive proclamations, demonstrating a growing national commitment to historical truth and cultural recognition; and

WHEREAS,

The Maryland General Assembly finds that recognition of the Arawak Taíno people represents an opportunity to affirm historical truth, celebrate cultural resilience, encourage education and preservation, and further establish Maryland as a leader in recognizing the enduring presence and contributions of Indigenous Caribbean peoples;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

That the General Assembly hereby recognizes the enduring history, resilience, cultural heritage, and continuing existence of the Arawak Taíno people and honors the many contributions of Arawak Taíno descendants to the State of Maryland, the United States, and the Caribbean; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the General Assembly encourages educational institutions, libraries, museums, historical societies, archives, and cultural organizations throughout Maryland to promote accurate education concerning the history, survival, and continuing legacy of the Arawak Taíno people; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the General Assembly encourages statewide observance of Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage on the fourth Saturday of April through educational, historical, artistic, and cultural activities that increase public understanding and appreciation of the Arawak Taíno people; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the General Assembly recognizes the importance of preserving Arawak Taíno oral history, genealogy, language, archaeology, traditional ecological knowledge, artistic expression, and cultural practices for the benefit of future generations; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the General Assembly respectfully encourages collaboration among State agencies, local governments, educational institutions, museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, cultural organizations, and Arawak Taíno community organizations to advance public awareness, historical understanding, educational opportunities, cultural preservation, and community engagement relating to the history and continuing presence of the Arawak Taíno people in Maryland and throughout the Americas; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the General Assembly affirms Maryland's commitment to promoting historical accuracy, cultural understanding, respectful dialogue, and recognition of the diverse Indigenous and Caribbean communities whose histories and contributions continue to enrich the State of Maryland; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of Legislative Services to the Governor of Maryland, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland State Archives, the Maryland Historical Trust, the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, the Maryland Department of Planning, and such other agencies and organizations as may assist in advancing the educational and cultural purposes expressed in this Resolution.

Statement of Legislative Intent

It is the intent of the Maryland General Assembly that this Resolution serve as an enduring expression of the State's recognition of the Arawak Taíno people, affirm their continuing existence and cultural resilience, encourage historical accuracy and educational awareness, promote the preservation of Indigenous Caribbean heritage, and inspire continued collaboration among public institutions and community organizations in preserving and celebrating the enduring legacy of the Arawak Taíno people for present and future generations.

APPENDIX D

PROPOSED GUBERNATORIAL PROCLAMATION

STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

PROCLAMATION

Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day

Fourth Saturday of April

WHEREAS,

The Arawak Taíno people are the Indigenous Peoples of the Greater Antilles and portions of the Lucayan Archipelago, including the islands historically known as Borikén (Puerto Rico), Ayiti and Quisqueya (Hispaniola), Xaymaca (Jamaica), Cuba, the Bahamas, and neighboring Caribbean regions; and

WHEREAS,

For centuries before European contact, the Arawak Taíno people developed thriving societies distinguished by advanced agriculture, governance, navigation, environmental stewardship, artistry, spirituality, commerce, and community life that contributed significantly to the cultural foundation of the Caribbean; and

WHEREAS,

The Arawak Taíno people were among the first Indigenous Peoples encountered during Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage, forever altering the history of the Caribbean and the Americas; and

WHEREAS,

Although generations of historical narratives incorrectly asserted the extinction of the Taíno people, modern historical scholarship, archaeological evidence, genealogical research, oral traditions, and the continued existence of organized Arawak Taíno communities affirm that the Arawak Taíno people have endured and continue to preserve their identity, traditions, language, and cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS,

The resilience of the Arawak Taíno people stands as a powerful testament to the strength of Indigenous communities that survived colonization, disease, displacement, forced labor, assimilation, and centuries of cultural suppression while preserving their ancestral traditions and identity; and

WHEREAS,

Maryland is home to residents of Arawak Taíno descent whose contributions enrich every aspect of our communities through public service, education, healthcare, military service, law enforcement, emergency services, business, science, technology, the arts, culture, faith, and civic leadership; and

WHEREAS,

The State of Maryland recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting historical accuracy regarding the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean and acknowledges the enduring contributions that Arawak Taíno descendants continue to make to the cultural, educational, economic, and civic life of our State; and

WHEREAS,

Recognizing Arawak Taíno Cultural Heritage Day provides an opportunity to celebrate Indigenous Caribbean heritage, encourage historical understanding, promote cultural appreciation, and inspire future generations to preserve the traditions, stories, and enduring legacy of the Arawak Taíno people; and

WHEREAS,

Maryland has long demonstrated its commitment to diversity, inclusion, historical integrity, cultural understanding, and respect for the many communities whose heritage contributes to the strength and character of our State; and

WHEREAS,

The people of Maryland recognize that acknowledging the continued existence and resilience of the Arawak Taíno people affirms historical truth while honoring one of the oldest living Indigenous cultures of the Americas and reinforcing our shared commitment to education, preservation, mutual respect, and cultural understanding;

NOW, THEREFORE,

I, WES MOORE, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and Laws of the State of Maryland, do hereby proclaim the fourth Saturday of April of each year as

ARAWAK TAÍNO CULTURAL HERITAGE DAY

in Maryland and do commend this observance to all of our citizens.

I encourage all Marylanders to join in recognizing the enduring history, resilience, and cultural contributions of the Arawak Taíno people by participating in educational programs, cultural celebrations, historical exhibitions, community events, and activities that promote a greater understanding of the Indigenous history of the Caribbean and the continuing presence of Arawak Taíno descendants within our State and throughout our Nation.

Furthermore, I encourage schools, colleges and universities, libraries, museums, archives, historical societies, cultural institutions, community organizations, and public agencies to collaborate in preserving and sharing the history, traditions, language, oral histories, arts, and cultural heritage of the Arawak Taíno people so that future generations may better understand and appreciate their enduring legacy.

Given Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland, this _____ day of _____, Two Thousand Twenty-Seven.

WES MOORE

Governor

Attest:

Secretary of State

Governor's Statement of Purpose

The State of Maryland proudly recognizes the Arawak Taíno people as an enduring Indigenous people whose history, resilience, and contributions continue to enrich our communities and strengthen the cultural fabric of our State. This proclamation reflects Maryland's commitment to historical truth, cultural preservation, educational opportunity, and mutual respect. By honoring the Arawak Taíno people, Maryland reaffirms that diversity is strengthened through knowledge, that history is preserved through education, and that the stories of living Indigenous communities deserve recognition, celebration, and remembrance by present and future generations alike.

Understanding the demographic presence of Caribbean communities provides important context for recognizing the cultural heritage of Indigenous Caribbean peoples whose descendants continue to reside within the state.

REFERENCES

The historical and cultural information referenced in this briefing packet draws upon established scholarship in Caribbean Indigenous history, anthropology, and linguistics.

Selected sources include:

Irving Rouse

The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus

Samuel M. Wilson

The Indigenous People of the Caribbean

José R. Oliver

Research on Taíno archaeology and Caribbean migration patterns

Antonio Stevens-Arroyo

Cave of the Jagua: The Mythological World of the Taíno

William F. Keegan and Corinne L. Hofman

The Caribbean Before Columbus

Herald T. Milanich

Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe

U.S. Census Bureau

American Community Survey demographic data

Legislative records and government proclamations recognizing Taíno heritage across the United States.

These sources collectively demonstrate that the Taíno people represent a historically documented Indigenous Caribbean civilization whose cultural legacy continues among descendants throughout the Americas.

Proclamation

THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MARYLAND

- WHEREAS,** the Arawak Taino people are among the original Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, whose history, cultural traditions, and innovations have shaped the broader cultural landscape of the Americas; and
- WHEREAS,** Arawak Taino descendants continue to preserve, share, and revitalize their cultural identity, contributing to a deeper public understanding of Caribbean and Indigenous heritage; and
- WHEREAS,** more than 16,700 Caribbean-descended residents enrich Montgomery County, and because Taino heritage has left a lasting cultural imprint throughout the Caribbean, many members of the local Caribbean community maintain ancestral, historical, or cultural connections to the Arawak Taino peoples of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad, the Bahamas, and Barbados; and
- WHEREAS,** the Arawak Taino people have influenced language, agriculture, environmental practices, and cultural traditions that remain evident in modern life, including within the diverse communities of Montgomery County; and
- WHEREAS,** promoting awareness of Arawak Taino history supports broader cultural education, encourages respectful engagement with Indigenous heritage, and helps recognize the depth and diversity of Caribbean cultural identities; and
- WHEREAS,** recognizing the ongoing community efforts led by the Taino American Indigenous National Organization (TAINO) to promote awareness, education, and cultural reflection during the fourth Saturday of April honors Arawak Taino heritage, resilience, and enduring contributions to Montgomery County and the Americas; and
- WHEREAS,** Montgomery County values the many cultures and histories that strengthen our community and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the region's past and present.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Council of Montgomery County, Maryland, hereby recognizes and honors

THE ARAWAK TAÍNO PEOPLE & THEIR LIVING DESCENDANTS

and commend their enduring contributions to our shared history and community.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council expresses its appreciation to community members and organizations who preserve, share, and promote Arawak Taino history and culture, and encourages continued cultural awareness, education, and respectful engagement with Indigenous and Caribbean heritage throughout Montgomery County.

Presented on this 29th day of May in the year 2025.



The State of Maryland



Governor of the State of Maryland, to

T.A.I.N.O.

ARIETO YUKAYU GUAYIGA
A ARAWAK TAINO REVITALIZATION, RESURGENCE, RECLAIMING OUR TRUTH

, Greetings:

Be it Known: Because of your demonstration of high integrity and ability, meriting our great trust and respect, we are most pleased to award you the

Governor's Citation

in appreciation of your outstanding services to the citizens of this State



Witness My Hand and the Seal of the State of Maryland
this 28 day of May
1994

Anura Miller

Governor

Susan C. Lee
Secretary of State



Every Signature Counts! Yours in particular carries more weight. We respectfully ask that you scan and complete our online petition.