

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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Dear Fellow Marylander:

Every February, we mark Black History Month by coming together to highlight the achievements and contributions of Black Americans to our national story, and the centuries of struggle that have shaped our society.

At every turning point in American history, Black American advancements and calls to action have driven our nation's cultural, economic and social progress forward, and helped hold to account the promises of freedom and equality for all that our founding doctrine failed to uphold.

For too long, this history and the names and faces of those who marched, sacrificed and fought for change, have been obscured by prejudice and hate. It is our responsibility to remember those who marched for justice, the causes they sacrificed to defend, and the forces they marched against.

When we ignore the systemic racism of our past, we cannot right those wrongs in the present. The consequences of such inattention are grave and live on in present day: the ongoing racial and religious profiling; brutality and killing of Black Americans by police; the high rates of COVID-19 transmission and death in Black communities; and disproportionate impact this current economic crisis has had on Black workers and Black-owned businesses.

Last year, our nation's fight against racism was given new urgency by the callous killing of George Floyd by a police officer in May. While the Trump

administration fanned the flames of bigotry, hate and racism, leaders across the nation mobilized against them and against inequities in our criminal justice, economic, and healthcare systems. People marched, mobilized, and voted to advance justice and keep our communities safe.

The historic election of President Joe Biden, and our nation's first Black woman Vice President, Kamala Harris, serve as a reminder of the power of collective action. The new administration gives us opportunity to take meaningful action in government to create a more just society.

In the year ahead, Congress must work together to advance the *George Floyd Justice in Policing Act* to bring transparency and accountability to law enforcement, as well as the *John Lewis Voting Rights Act* to combat voter suppression and finally restore the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*. It is our charge to mobilize at all levels – from our communities to the Oval Office – to advance social, economic, and civil rights and justice to all Americans and to finally expel all vestiges of slavery and white supremacy that exist in our nation.

Black History is American history, it is the story of Maryland and it is the story of our nation. Black History Month is a reminder to look toward this past and to act on our responsibilities in the present.

Celebrating Black experiences and culture contributes to the greatness of our diverse society. It highlights one of the many strong components that make this nation a beacon around the world despite our inherent flaws.

The realization of justice and true equity rests on our work to build a country committed to righting historic wrongs, closing gaps in achievement an opportunity, and dismantling vestiges of inequality in our foundations. I remain fully committed to justice, equality and opportunity and the American values that we embrace in our effort to form a more perfect Union.

Thank you. Stay well.



Ben Cardin

