

Pinky Cole Hayes To Join 2026 Food Lion CIAA Championship Basketball Tournament as Official Ambassador

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, November 19, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association](#) (CIAA®), the nation's oldest historically Black athletic conference, is proud to announce [Pinky Cole Hayes](#) as an official ambassador for the highly anticipated 2026 Food Lion CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Championship Tournament. As a Baltimore native, Restaurateur, Philanthropist, and Influencer, Pinky will inspire pride with students, alumni, and Charm City, showcasing what's possible when opportunity meets intention.

"Pinky" Cole Hayes is a Jamaican-American restaurateur, author, community activist, and owner of the Slutty Vegan restaurant chain and Bar Vegan that started in Atlanta, Georgia and now has locations in New York City, Dallas and most recently launched in Baltimore, MD. Cole Hayes is a culinary disruptor in the industry, transforming America's view of plant-based fast food and striving to make plant-based eating delicious, accessible, and enjoyable for vegans and flexitarians alike. In addition to her work in the food industry, Pinky is also a philanthropist and head of The Pinky Cole Foundation, which is committed to uplifting marginalized and underrepresented communities and breaking the cycle of poverty by providing access to resources and education to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. To learn more about Pinky Cole Hayes, visit [iampinkycole.com](#) and follow @pinkycole on Instagram and @pinky907 on X (formerly Twitter).



"Pinky Cole's story reflects everything we hope to ignite through the CIAA — pride, perseverance, and purpose," said CIAA Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams Parker. "Her Baltimore roots, entrepreneurial drive, and commitment to giving back make her the perfect ambassador to connect with our fans and future leaders as we bring the 2026 Tournament home to Charm

City.”

“Everything I am started in Baltimore,” said Pinky Cole Hayes. “This city taught me how to be fearless and independent, to hustle hard, and to show up with heart. Being named a 2026 CIAA Tournament Ambassador feels like coming home to celebrate the people and the place that shaped me. I can’t wait to pour that same Baltimore energy into this incredible event.”

The CIAA Basketball Tournament, set for February 24 – 28, 2026 at CFG Bank Arena in Baltimore is more than just basketball, it’s a cultural celebration unlike any other.

All tickets are now available at CIAATournament.org. Take advantage of the BLACK FRIDAY ticket sale

(November 28-December 1), enter code CIAA to get \$50 off Weekend General Admission Tickets.



2026 Food Lion CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament Logo

Fans and alumni are invited to “Come Home to Baltimore” and experience:

“

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Pinky Cole Hayes

22 action-packed men’s and women’s basketball games
The legendary FREE 2-Day Fan Fest
Education Day, Career Expo, Greek Night, Step Shows
Official concerts, day parties, celebrity sightings and much more!

Following the recent extension of CIAA’s partnership with Baltimore through 2029, Charm City continues to be the proud home of CIAA Basketball, a place where HBCU pride, culture, and legacy take center stage. CFG Bank Arena will come alive with the energy of alumni, students, athletes, the Divine Nine, and fans from across the country for an

unforgettable celebration of HBCU excellence.

To purchase tickets, book hotels and get the latest information about the CIAA, visit CIAATournament.org. Fans can also like us on Facebook, and follow us on X, Instagram, and

Twitch.

About the CIAA

Founded in 1912, the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) is the first and longest running African American athletic conference in the U.S., and one of the most recognized conferences in Division II. The CIAA conducts 14 championships attended by more than 150,000 fans from around the country. The Basketball Tournament has been honored as a 2019 Champion of Economic Impact in Sports Tourism by Sports Destination Management, the leading publication with the largest circulation of sports event planners and tournament directors in the sports tourism market, for both 2018 and 2019.

Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, the CIAA is governed by the Presidents and Chancellors of its 12 member institutions: Bowie State University, Bluefield State University, Claflin University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, Livingstone College, Shaw University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Winston-Salem State University. For more information on the CIAA, visit theciaa.com, like us on Facebook, and follow us on X and Instagram.

About Visit Baltimore

Visit Baltimore is the official sales and marketing arm for the City of Baltimore. The 501(c)(6) non-profit organization generates economic benefits for stakeholders through the attraction of convention, group and leisure visitors. In 2022, 26.7 million people visited Baltimore for overnight and day trips, spending a total of \$3.7 billion to Baltimore's economy. For more information, please visit Baltimore.org.

Jenny McIntosh

MARC Global Communications

+1 480-202-7112

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