



January 24, 2023

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB88 Public Safety – Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission – Prohibition Against Certain Affiliation or Support by Police Officers**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 88 sponsored by Delegate Gabriel Acevero. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

This bill aims to require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to prohibit law enforcement officers from affiliating with, supporting, or advocating for White supremacist groups, ideologies or causes or participating in or actively promoting extremist groups.

According to the White House's National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, domestic terrorism is the "most urgent terrorism threat facing the United States today."<sup>1</sup> On President Biden's first full day in office, he directed his national security team to lead a comprehensive review of the federal government's efforts to address this threat. Among the key findings were that the "two most lethal elements of today's domestic terrorism threat are (1) racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate for the superiority of the white race and (2) anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists, such as militia violent extremists."

During the deadly January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol following the defeat of then-President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, a mob of his supporters descended on the Capitol building in a violent attempt to block Congress from certifying the election results. In the days following the Capitol insurgency, amidst growing concerns over a delayed response to quell the mob, an investigation was launched into 35 Capitol Police officers, including one officer who took a selfie with a protester, and another who wore a Trump hat and directed protesters around the building.<sup>2</sup>

Data, statistics and intelligence indicate that white nationalist groups have infiltrated law enforcement agencies in every region of the country.<sup>3</sup> This includes here in Maryland, where, in the past, our organization has joined others in condemning racist tweets allegedly attributed to a Baltimore County police officer.<sup>4</sup>

Trust within the law enforcement community plays a vital role in public safety. This trust has long been compromised especially amongst communities of color who are disproportionately harmed by racist policies and practices.

CAIR supports the First Amendment rights of Maryland law enforcement officers to continue participating in conservative, moderate, or liberal political organizations, movements, and their ability to engage and petition the government. However, Maryland residents' ability to trust in law enforcement officers - whom they have entrusted with the authority to uphold the law and protect their communities - necessitates that these public servants be held to reasonable standards of employment, including not being a member of any hate group, including white nationalist groups.

Passing this bill would promote accountability and impartiality, help ensure high standards for conduct within these agencies and restore a measure of public trust within officers sworn to protect and serve. Therefore, we support this bill and respectfully urge your favorable vote. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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- 1) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/15/fact-sheet-national-strategy-for-counteracting-domestic-terrorism/>
- 2) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-capitol-police/u-s-capitol-police-investigating-role-of-35-officers-during-january-6-riot-idUSKBN2AJ243>
- 3) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/27/white-supremacists-militias-infiltrate-us-police-report>
- 4) <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-county/ph-ca-at-tt-police-investigation-20190201-story.html>