

February 16, 2024

Dear Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair J. Sandy Bartlett and Judiciary Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 0763, "Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Membership - Alterations," sponsored by Delegates Attar, Vogel, and Rosenberg.

Given the climate we are in, with the dramatic rise in hate crimes (including murder and attempted murder) and Islamophobia against my community, I feel even more bewildered and unsafe at the mere suggestion of removing the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Maryland Office from the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. In fact, the proposal raises serious concerns, and I feel it works against the safety of my community. CAIR, being a nonprofit, grassroots civil rights, and advocacy organization, has been my community's go-to for help and support in frightening times such as these.

As the largest Muslim civil liberties organization in the United States, with affiliate offices nationwide and its national headquarters on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., CAIR has played an essential role in ensuring that the Muslim community's voice is heard and represented. Through effective media relations, lobbying, education, and advocacy, CAIR has worked diligently to empower American Muslims and encourage their active participation in political and social activism.

The proposed alteration to the Commission's membership, which involves removing the CAIR representative and adding two members of the Muslim community appointed by the Attorney General, could inadvertently hinder the inclusive representation that CAIR has consistently provided. It is crucial to recognize and preserve the valuable contributions of CAIR to the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB0763 and ensure that any modifications to the Commission's membership foster inclusivity and maintain the diverse perspectives necessary for addressing the complex issue of hate crimes.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

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