



February 6, 2024

Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0585 Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024

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 strong support of House Bill 585 Protecting Election Officials Act. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

I am writing to provide testimony on the critical importance of safeguarding election judges from threats and harm, particularly in light of the alarming trend of individuals targeting election officials and their families due to their involvement in the electoral process.

Election judges play a fundamental role in ensuring the integrity, fairness, and transparency of our democratic system. They work tirelessly to facilitate the voting process, uphold election laws, and safeguard the rights of voters. However, in recent years, there has been a disturbing rise in threats, intimidation, and violence directed at election judges, posing a grave threat to the democratic process itself.

Threats to harm an election official, or their immediate family members because of their role in administering elections not only jeopardize the safety and well-being of these individuals but also undermine the very foundation of our democracy. Such acts of intimidation are intended to silence dissent, undermine public trust in the electoral process, and disrupt the functioning of our democratic institutions.

This legislation has personal significance to me as well. In the past, I experienced hostile, intimidating behavior while serving as an election judge in Howard County that led me to be concerned for my safety as I walked to my car in the parking lot at the end of my shift.

It is imperative that we take decisive action to protect election judges and their families from threats and ensure that they can carry out their duties without fear of reprisal. The proposed legislation to establish penalties for those who threaten or harm election officials is an important deterrent and a step in this direction.

By making it clear that threatening or harming election officials is a punishable offense, we send a strong message that such behavior will not be tolerated in our society. Moreover, by imposing meaningful penalties, including imprisonment and fines, we uphold the rule of law and deter individuals from engaging in such reprehensible acts.

In conclusion, protecting election judges from threats and harm is not only a matter of safeguarding individual safety but also of defending the integrity and credibility of our democratic process. I urge you to support HB0585 and take concrete steps to ensure that election officials can carry out their vital duties without fear or intimidation.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this important issue

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
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