



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

February 20, 2024

Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: HB 748 – State Government – Commission on Hate Crime Response
and Prevention - Code of Conduct

Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP. We oppose House Bill 748, State Government – Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Code of Conduct. We ask that all members of the committee oppose this legislation that seeks to provide a code of conduct on the Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention in the Office of Attorney.

This legislation introduced by Delegates Cardin Attar, Vogel, et al, is a direct attack against CAIR over its advocacy in support of Palestine. CAIR's mission is to protect civil rights, enhance understanding of Islam, promote justice and empower American Muslims. The effect of this code may cause a chilling effect by silencing members of the commission through the code of conduct and providing a pathway to threaten suspension for acts that do not align with the Attorney General's Office.

This bill seeks to amend the Code of Maryland Article – State Government 6-802. The amendment serves as a coordinated effort to **REMOVE** and further condemn the only council that represents the Islamic and Muslim community and replace it with “two representatives of the Muslim Community”.

In or around November 2023, the Attorney General suspended the Executive Director of CAIR, Dr. Zainub Chaudry, however, she was later reinstated by the Attorney General's office. On the issue of the suspension, the AG's office stated that “the AG office lacked the authority from the legislation creating the commission to remove or suspend a commissioner during their 4-year term of service” (WMAR 2 Baltimore). The Attorney General's Offices further stated “...the Attorney General will distribute draft operating guidelines to members which include personal communications and how to balance the members' right to freedom of speech and their role as commissioners for their review and feedback”. Since the AGO lacked the ability to continue the suspension, we believe this bill acts as an alternative to silence and remove members of the commission all together and may infringe on each members' constitutional right to free speech.

The removal coupled with the evidence of obvious dissention further demonstrates that the purpose of this bill is to excommunicate or strip away any specific group that fails to “fall in line” with the Attorney General’s office.

A code of conduct should be created, agreed upon and submitted by the members of the commission in order to provide an equitable solution to concerns that may arise.

We encourage the Committee to oppose HB 748, Thank you.

In Service,

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