



Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

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TONI HOLNESS
PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR

SB 580 Public Safety - Empowering Communities to Counter Racially Motivated Violent Extremism Program Fund - Establishment

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION OF
MARYLAND

UNFAVORABLE

MAIN OFFICE
& MAILING ADDRESS
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

The ACLU of Maryland respectfully opposes SB 580, which establishes an Empowering Communities to Counter Racially Motivated Violent Extremism Program Fund to identify warning signs of racially motivated violent extremism.

FIELD OFFICE
6930 CARROLL AVENUE
SUITE 610
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912
T/240-274-5295

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have been established across the country and even here in Maryland. Typically, these programs are funded by the federal government and involve the deployment of local community members to collect information about their neighbors, other members of their faith, and even students. This tactic sows distrust and division within what may otherwise be close-knit, peaceful communities.

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JOHN HENDERSON
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Even worse, the programs also improperly stigmatize communities of color, Muslim communities, and other historically marginalized people for whom typical and innocuous behavior may be perceived as threatening, alarming, or violent.

While we applaud and support efforts to address hateful violence in our communities, we respectfully urge the committee to consider other approaches besides emulating failed and biased programs, such as the CVE program.

For greater context, we have attached a 2016 letter the ACLU sent to President Obama in opposition to CVE programs.¹

¹ Coalition Letter to the White House re: Federal Support for Countering Violent Extremism Programs, available at <https://www.aclu.org/letter/coalition-letter-white-house-re-federal-support-countering-violent-extremism-programs>.