



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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January 16, 2020

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

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0005 – Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate

Dear Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair Vanessa Atterbeary 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 0005 entitled “Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate.” CAIR is America’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims.

My organization monitors and tracks the prevalence and incidence of hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents across America. Over the past several years, we have noted a steady uptick in the onslaught of institutional and individual prejudice against American Muslims, including especially against African and Black Americans who according to Pew research comprise at least one-fifth of the American Muslim population.¹

In recent months, we have condemned and denounced numerous suspected or known bias-motivated incidents particularly right here in Anne Arundel County. Among these, a racist effigy discovered on the property of a former Maryland county councilman², a noose discovered at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis³, and swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti threatening violence reported in a boy’s bathroom at Severn River Middle School⁴.

These acts embolden racism, precipitate violence against minority groups, and are often fueled by the same white supremacist ideologies that led to some of the most shameful and painful chapters in our country's history.

Hate is mainstream in our society today, and it's time to push it back to the fringes where it belongs. HB0005 introduced by Delegate Chang would prohibit the placement or inscription of items and symbols intended to threaten or intimidate others, including nooses or swastikas, on public or private property without the express permission of the owner, owner's agent or the lawful occupant.

We support this bill because it sets the tone for accountability, and we believe it will help discourage such behavior in the future. Therefore, we respectfully urge your vote in favor of it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/black-muslims-account-for-a-fifth-of-all-u-s-muslims-and-about-half-are-converts-to-islam/>
2. https://www.cair.com/cair_civil_rights_organizations_condemn_racist_effigy_discovered_on_property_of_fmr_maryland_county_councilman
3. <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/09/08/naval-academy-investigating-report-of-noose/>
4. <https://www.wmar2news.com/violent-statements-and-swastika-found-in-anne-arundel-county-middle-school-bathroom>