



January 17, 2021

Honorable Senator William C. Smith Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB220 – Hate Crimes-Protected Groups and Penalties

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 220 entitled Hate Crimes - Protected Groups and Penalties sponsored by Senator Shelly Hettleman. 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.

Hate crimes in the United States have reached an all-time high in over a decade.<sup>1</sup> This means that there are significantly more victims and survivors of criminal offences due to their race, religion, ethnicity, age, and gender than there were 10 years ago. Hate crimes are a malignant outgrowth of prejudicial thoughts and beliefs which have no place in today's society. Unlike other violent crimes, hate crimes are often motivated by ignorant, misguided beliefs about a particular group of people.

Anti-bias education involves creating an awareness of human differences. It promotes diversity, improves relationships, and teaches the harmful consequences of hate and bias. Such a training will help reduce the prevalence of these types of crimes by addressing the prejudicial thoughts and beliefs that fuel them. CAIR supports this bill because it addresses the root cause instead of simply resorting to punitive measures. We believe such measures will help discourage hateful behavior in the future. Therefore, we respectfully urge your vote in favor of it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Council on American-Islamic Relations  
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1. Balsamo, Michael. "Hate crimes in US reach highest level in more than a decade" *Associated Press*, <https://apnews.com/article/hate-crimes-rise-FBI-data-ebbcadca8458aba96575da905650120d>. January 17, 2021.