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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 864 – Public Safety – Taskforce on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism

Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 9, 2021

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 864 (SB864) would establish the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism. The taskforce would study ways the state can prevent domestic terrorism, hate, and other forms of extremism. After studying this issue, the taskforce would then make policy recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Written Comments: Earlier this month FBI Director Chris Wray testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee that domestic terrorism “has been metastasizing around the country for a long time now, and it’s not going away anytime soon.” Domestic terror is taking a new form, it is rapidly decentralizing and now organizing through new digital platforms capable of reaching, and radicalizing people like never before. This new and constantly changing landscape, combined with the swelling number of domestic terror organizations, makes this threat even more difficult for law enforcement to track. Now more than ever, we need to further understand what this growing threat means for Maryland, so that we can get ahead of it.

Whether it is a plot to kidnap and harm elected officials, overthrow the government or mass shootings targeting places of worship, domestic terrorism affects all of us regardless of background. We need to come together and address this issue as a state. SB864 will help us do that by forming a diverse taskforce to study domestic terrorism and hate. By taking a thorough look at the issue, we can ensure that the true perpetrators of this type of extremism are held responsible.

The Jewish community is among the communities most targeted by domestic terrorists. Our community is under constant threat, from the attack at the Tree of Life Synagogue, to Poway, Jersey City and Monsey. It is important for our community, and for our neighbors in other communities who are also targeted by extremism, that our state be doing everything possible to prevent domestic terrorism and combat hate.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on SB864.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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