



**Maryland General Assembly
House Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2024**

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
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ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of HB1154 – Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Domestic Terrorism Response**, which would establish an Office of Domestic Terrorism Response.

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, including from white supremacists and other far-right violent extremists, producing research to inform the public, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices to effectively address and counter these threats.

The intelligence and law enforcement communities are gravely concerned about the threat of Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE).¹ According to Anti-Defamation League (ADL) research, data that shows antisemitism, extremism, and violence committed by extremists are in periods of historical highs. In 2023, domestic extremists killed at least 17 people in the U.S. in 7 separate incidents.² All the extremist-related murders in 2023 were committed by right-wing extremists, with 15 of the 17 killings involving perpetrators or accomplices with white supremacist connections. This is the second consecutive year that right-wing extremists have been connected to all identified extremist-related killings. ADL tracked almost 130 counts of white supremacist propaganda in Maryland in 2022 and we expect the 2023 numbers to be even higher.

At the federal level, the Biden Administration released a National Strategy to Counter Domestic Terrorism, increased homeland security resources to address the threat, and established an office at the Department of Justice to deal specifically with domestic terrorism. The State of Maryland should follow suit. In its report in December of 2022, the State of Maryland Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism identified the need for standing entities to address the threat on an ongoing basis. Without a dedicated team, specialized in the threat, it will be difficult to create ongoing, carefully curated efforts to address domestic terrorism.

¹ E.g. DHS National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin. 30 November 2022. <https://www.dhs.gov/ntas/advisory/national-terrorism-advisory-system-bulletin-november-30-2022>; ODNI “Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021.” 1 March 2021. <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/UnclassSummaryofDVEAssessment-17MAR21.pdf>

² Anti-Defamation League. “Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2023.” February 20, 2024. <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-tracks-sharp-decline-extremist-related-murders-2023>

To pass and enact **HB1154** would ensure that domestic terrorism is taken seriously and has a standing, specialized office focused on the domestic terrorist threat. It would also ensure that the Task Force would advise the office, mitigating the potential for duplicative efforts and increasing the likelihood of multifaceted advice being provided to the office. With this office in place, the State of Maryland would be safer from the domestic violent extremist threat.

We understand that the Governor's Office of Homeland Security has also indicated their support for developing a strategy for addressing and reducing the risk of domestic terrorism in Maryland. We appreciate this acknowledgement and look forward to working with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the Office of Homeland Security to ensure that there is a dedicated team working in partnership with the legislature and private sector to implement the recommendations of the Maryland Task Force on Preventing & Countering Domestic Terrorism.

**We accordingly urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
to give HB1154 a favorable report.**