

TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL 809: FAVORABLE
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The need for legislation that empowers the designated authorities to remove commission members who engage in wrongful conduct is evident from events surrounding Maryland's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. The legislation establishing the Commission requires representation by a number of governmental and civic organizations, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Representing CAIR on the Commission is the director of its Maryland office, Zainab Chaudry.

In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 massacre, Ms. Chaudry, posted the following comments on Facebook:

On October 17, Ms. Chaudry wrote, "[T]hat moment when you become what you hated most," accompanied by photos of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin lit up with the Israeli flag in solidarity with Israel following the Hamas massacre of October 7, and a photo of the Gate in 1936 decorated with the Nazi flag.

On October 26, Ms. Chaudry wrote, "I will never be able to understand how the world summoned up rage for 40 fake Israeli babies while completely turning a blind eye to 3,000 real Palestinian babies."

On November 6, Ms. Chaudry suggested that the mere existence of Israel was the cause of the current conflict, calling Israel an "inconvenient fact," and including an image of the words "it all started in 1948," the year Israel was founded.

When reached for comment about these remarks, Ms. Chaudry told Fox News that she condemns Israel's "racist government" for "genocidal war crimes" and for making "genocidal threats towards the Palestinian people and killing over 13,000 Palestinians in Gaza, most of them women and children murdered in their homes."

Ms. Chaudry's comments mirror the views of CAIR. This past December, the White House disavowed the organization after its national executive director, Nihad Awad, declared that he "was happy to see" Palestinians break out of Gaza on Oct. 7, the day of the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel that killed an estimated 1,200 people and led to the seizure of 240 others as

hostages, and that Palestinians in Gaza “have the right to self-defense” but that Israel “as an occupying power” does not. The troubling history of CAIR is well documented; as noted by the ADL, “While ostensibly focused on responding to the proliferation of anti-Muslim incidents and sentiment nationwide, key CAIR leaders often traffic in antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric. In fact, some of its leaders have cultivated suspicion among the public toward a wide array of American Jewish institutions.” (<https://www.adl.org/resources/background/council-american-islamic-relations-cair>).

While Ms. Chaudry has every right to express her noxious opinions, the vitriol against Israel disqualifies her from serving on a Commission whose purpose is to "communicate and promote understanding of diverse perspectives in a positive and meaningful way." The presence of Ms. Chaudry on the Commission makes a mockery of the Commission's lofty goals, and is an insult to Maryland's Jewish community, and to all people of good will. Nevertheless, because Attorney General Brown claimed that he lacked statutory authority to remove Ms. Chaudry, she remains on the Commission to this day.

By authorizing the removal of commission members for good cause, HB809 resolves the conundrum supposedly faced by the AG. It is my hope that HB809 passes, and that AG Brown uses his new-found authority to ensure that individuals serving on the Commission truly reflect the Commission's ideals and aspirations.