

SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

Chair  
Rules Committee

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Health and Human Services

Pensions



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 203  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3131 · 301-858-3131  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131  
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
SB 755 MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
OFFICE OF DOMESTIC TERRORISM RESPONSE

In December 2022, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management submitted the Summary Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism. This report highlighted much needed actions to combat domestic terrorism in Maryland. SB 755 codifies the recommendations of the Task Force into law and makes clear that the State of Maryland does not – and will never – tolerate violent extremism.

Unfortunately, domestic terrorism in the United States is on the rise. While the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, will forever be etched in history, it was not a one-off event. Open domestic terrorism-related cases have grown more than three-fold over the past decade, with most incidents since 2010 being racially motivated or anti-governmental in nature (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2023). Since the January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection, we have seen those in our country who defend and applaud domestic terrorism and hate crimes, as well as who wrongfully characterize this behavior as patriotism.

Maryland is not immune to these threats. The U.S. Dept of Justice noted a 553% rise in hate crime incidents between 2020 and 2022 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). Majority of these crimes were also motivated by race or ancestry and against persons and property. (US Department of Justice, 2024) Additionally, last February the FBI charged a woman from Baltimore County with conspiring with a neo-Nazi leader in Florida to destroy energy facilities surrounding Baltimore City. (Tucker & Skene, 2023) We must address this behavior in a systematic way to keep Maryland families and communities safe.

SB 755 addresses violent extremism in our state by establishing an Office of Domestic Terrorism Response in the Department of Emergency Management. **In discussions with the Administration about where the most appropriate placement of these responsibilities is, we have an amendment to place the responsibility for implementing the Task Force’s recommendations into the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security** rather than the Department of Emergency Management. The Office will work with federal, state, and local agencies to:

1. Maximize the roles of colleges and universities in researching and developing professional training on how to combat violent extremism
2. Raise awareness among the public about violent extremism, especially in regard to hate crimes, domestic terrorism, and international terrorism

The bill also requires the Office to report to the General Assembly and the Governor annually on its activities, recommended legislation, and resources required to carry out its purpose and duties. One of the recommendations by the Task Force was for the State to invest in permanent capabilities to address and prevent violent extremism. Action is needed now to protect our citizens. **SB 755 is that action.**

I urge a favorable report on SB 755, and I thank you for your consideration.