

SB755 - Maryland Department of Emergency Management

Uploaded by: George Anas

Position: FAV

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To: The Honorable Willam Smith, Chairman, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Joel Rozner

Re: SB755: Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Domestic Terrorism Response

Date: February 26, 2024

Attached, please find written testimony submitted by George Anas with Berkshire Hathaway GT&S in support of SB755: Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Domestic Terrorism Response.



SB755/HB1154: Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Domestic Terrorism Response

POSITION: Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support SB755/HB1154 for the establishment of the Office of Domestic Terrorism within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management.

Berkshire Hathaway Energy GT&S owns a majority stake in Cove Point LNG, which has been exporting liquefied natural gas since 2018 to countries and allies worldwide. With infrastructure in Maryland and across the country in nine other Berkshire Hathaway Energy business units, physical security is of paramount importance to our company.

In consideration of domestic terrorism as it relates to critical infrastructure (gas, electric, water utility, fiber optic, cable network, wireless communications, data centers, ports, and other) the establishment of the Office of Domestic Terrorism will create an opportunity to develop and promote awareness of the importance of physical infrastructure security on these systems in Maryland.

Across the country attacks on critical infrastructure are on the rise. In two separate examples just last December, vandals in North Carolina damaged a substation leaving 34,000 people without power. In Washington State, another group damaged four substations, leaving 14,000 people without power. As Maryland seeks to expand renewable energy in the state, new infrastructure will be needed to meet increased power demands and to transport energy from offshore and rural areas. This development will further expose the state's infrastructure to risk.

The Office of Domestic Terrorism will enable companies like ours to partner with Maryland to develop best-in-class practices and to promote the importance of physical security for all the state's critical infrastructure systems.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report on SB755/HB1154.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George K. Anas".

George K. Anas
Director of External Affairs

SB755 - Domestic Terrorism Office Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Howard Libit

Position: FAV

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Howard County
Beth Tfiloh Congregation
B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region
B'nai Israel Congregation
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Jewish War Veterans
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Jews For Judaism
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Religious Zionists of America
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
Shomrei Emunah Congregation
Suburban Orthodox Congregation
Temple Beth Shalom
Temple Isaiah
Zionist Organization of America
Baltimore District

Written Testimony

**Senate Bill 755 - Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office
of Domestic Terrorism Response
Judicial Proceedings Committee – February 27, 2024**

Support

Background: Senate Bill 755 would establish the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management for the purpose of implementing measures to prepare for, prevent, and recover from domestic terrorism and hate crimes; and generally relating to emergency management and the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response. The creation of the office is the explicit recommendation of Maryland's Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism, which was first convened in fall 2021.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. The BJC's responsibilities include helping to coordinate security preparations, trainings, and responses for The Associated system and the Jewish community institutions in most Maryland jurisdictions.

Domestic terrorism continues to be an increasing threat across our country. Numerous threats have been identified and stopped over the past several years, and the horrific events of October 7th have substantially increased threats against not just the Jewish community, but communities across Maryland. Our state contains a number of potential high-profile targets for domestic terrorists, ranging from LNG facilities in Southern Maryland to federal military facilities to transportation hubs along the Baltimore Harbor to the many federal officials who live in the Washington suburbs.

Statistics also show a significant rise in antisemitic incidents in Maryland. Since October 7th, 2023, the ADL reports a nearly 400% increase in antisemitic incidents nationally compared to the same period in 2022. Both the Maryland State Police and ADL report record numbers of hate crime incidents against the Jewish community in 2022 (the most recent available data), and those numbers are expected to be significantly higher when the 2023 data is released.

To help address this unending threat, Maryland's Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism was first convened in Fall 2021, with a goal of determining how to effectively oppose domestic terrorism in Maryland, including, but not limited to, countering online extremism while

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Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

 **The Associated**
Jewish Federation of Baltimore

protecting First Amendment rights. Membership included representatives from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, State Police, the House of Delegates, the Office of the Attorney General, the Public Defender's Office, the Anti-Defamation League, the NAACP, U.S. Dept of Homeland Security, and many other interested parties, including the Baltimore Jewish Council.

The creation of an Office of Domestic Terrorism Response is also critical to implement the other recommendations of Maryland's task force, including:

- Investing in a permanent State of Maryland capability focused on violent extremism prevention to include not only domestic terrorism but also homegrown violent extremism associated with international terrorism, as well as hate crimes.
- Adopting an approach to violence prevention that includes primary prevention (e.g., raising awareness of violent extremism, increasing trust and lines of communication between communities and local government), secondary prevention (e.g., multidisciplinary interventions for at-risk individuals), and tertiary prevention (e.g., rehabilitation and reintegration).
- Requiring a report annually by December 1 to the Governor and the General Assembly on the Office's activities, proposed legislation, and required resources.

We understand there are discussions with the Governor's Office as to where to place the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response. While the bill proposes that it be placed under the Department of Emergency Management, we are comfortable with a proposed alternative of putting it within the Governor's Office of Homeland Security.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on SB755 to assist our state's collective fight against hate, antisemitism, extremism, and domestic terrorism.

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.

ADL Testimony MD_DT Office SB755.pdf

Uploaded by: Meredith Weisel

Position: FAV



Maryland General Assembly
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 27, 2024

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
ADL Washington D.C. Regional Director

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of SB755**, 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 SB755 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 SB755 a favorable report.**

SB755_FAV_Hettleman.pdf

Uploaded by: Shelly Hettleman

Position: FAV

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
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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 6th 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.

LOI - MDEM - SB755 - Office of Domestic Terrorism

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: INFO

Letter of Information - SB755
Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Domestic Terrorism Response

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Hearing Date: 27 FEB 2024

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

Chairman Smith, Jr.,

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes **to provide a letter of information on SB755 - Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Domestic Terrorism Response**. The bill requires MDEM to establish a new office to increase preparedness, prevention, and recovery from domestic terrorism and hate crimes as well as public awareness of the threats related to domestic terrorism.

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security is currently the lead entity for terrorism prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities, supported by various State departments including the Maryland State Police, Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, and MDEM. GOHS was established by [Executive Order 01.01.2003.18](#) by Governor Ehrlich in 2003, which includes as the duties:

(5) Direct and coordinate policy and actions relating to homeland security across State agencies and political subdivisions; emphasize communication and cooperation with subdivision agencies and their first responders on all homeland security concerns; provide executive and legislative recommendations to streamline existing committees, commissions, agencies or departments to prevent redundancy or enhance efficiency.

In 2023, the Maryland General Assembly permanently established the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention under the Office of the Attorney General. In



State Government Article §6-702(H) the Commission is charged with developing strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity, and to evaluate state laws and policies relating to hate crimes. Each year the Commission is also required to report to the State Department of Education on policy recommendations related to hate crimes that occur in schools, and to the Maryland General Assembly on legislative recommendations to address hate crimes in the State.

Lastly, the Department of Justice also mandates each state have an [Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council \(ATAC\)](#), managed by the US Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland. Detailed information on the mission and responsibility of the ATAC can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.