

# **JCRC Senate HB 763 Commission on Hate Crime and Pr**

Uploaded by: deborah miller

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 763–  
Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Membership and Sunset  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 27, 2024**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 763 which alters the membership of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention and gives the Attorney General the flexibility to appoint people who he believes are most suitable to serve on the Commission given its mandate to combat hatred. It's unfortunate that this bill is necessary and it's not something the JCRC takes lightly. However, the hateful, dehumanizing statements made by CAIR leadership on numerous occasions have forced us into this role.

It has been a privilege for the JCRC to sit on this Commission and participate in its Community Engagement Subcommittee where we are developing best practices for reporting hate crimes and bias incidents. Our mission is to heal the community, not divide it. CAIR was not up to this task. A group that espouses vitriol and hatred for the Jewish community does not deserve nor belong on a Commission that has been established to respond to and prevent hate. We are expected to work with one another, not against one another. On October 7th, the Jewish people experienced the most brutal attack since the Holocaust. Hamas murdered 1200 people and took 240 hostages. CAIR's response? It praised Hamas and compared Israel to Nazi Germany. Comments so egregious that President Biden rebuked CAIR and removed the organization from the White House's blueprint to address antisemitism.

The JCRC is confident that the Attorney General will appoint 15 people of goodwill and diversity who represent the protected class under the State hate crime laws. We trust his ability to select members who are mainstream, tolerant, and inclusive, and will not espouse vitriol and hatred that undermine the work of the Commission. We must collaborate and engage in constructive dialogue to serve as a role model for all of Maryland to respond to and prevent hate. For these reasons, we support HB 763.



**HB 763 testimony March 26.pdf**

Uploaded by: JAY BERNSTEIN

Position: FAV

## **TESTIMONY REGARDING HB763: FAVORABLE**

Jay Bernstein, 6310 Ivymount Road, Baltimore, MD 21209

People and groups who engage in hate speech should not serve on an anti-hate commission. However, as currently constituted, Maryland's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention does not satisfy this most basic requirement.

As required by Maryland law, the Commission includes a representative of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The designated representative is Zainab Chaudry, the director of CAIR's Maryland office. Both Ms. Chaudry and CAIR are defenders of the abhorrent massacre perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli men, women and children on October 7, 2023. Ms. Chaudry has characterized the events of October 7 as an "uprising" of "freedom fighters" against a Jewish State that she compared to Nazi Germany, and CAIR's national executive director, Nihad Awad, declared that he "was happy to see" Palestinians break out of Gaza on October 7, and proclaimed that "as an occupying power," Israel has no right of self-defense.

CAIR and Ms. Chaudry have every right to applaud terrorists who viciously murdered 1200 Israelis, and abducted over 200 men, women and children, many of whom are still in captivity. However, by doing so, they disqualified themselves from serving on a Commission whose very purpose is to "communicate and promote understanding of diverse perspectives in a positive and meaningful way." By revising the statute to exclude a mandatory representative of CAIR (as well as other ethnic-specific groups), HB763 empowers the AG to remove Ms. Chaudry, and (if he so chooses) to replace her with a representative of the Islamic community who does not engage in hate speech.

Ignoring and seemingly indifferent to the noxiousness of CAIR's support of the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust, opponents of HB763 -- which include local representatives of the ACLU, the NAACP, and Jewish Voices for Peace -- testified before the House Judiciary Committee that the bill was a vicious smear campaign designed to quash Palestinian voices and to undermine democratic values. None of these criticisms of HB763 are justified.

First, far from being a "smear campaign," the comments of Ms. Chaudry and

Mr. Awad that form the basis for HB763 are a matter of record. The White House issued a statement condemning Mr. Awad's "shocking, anti-Semitic statements in the strongest terms." Ms. Chaudry has never denied her comments, and at last week's hearing, she was specifically asked whether she retracted her comments, but declined to do so.

Second, the aim of HB763 is not to "quash" Palestinian voices; it is remove hateful and inflammatory voices. CAIR should be removed from the Commission not because of its position regarding Israel, Palestinians, settlements, or the current war in Gaza, but rather because of its approval of the murder of Jews.

Finally, what will undermine democracy is not the passage of HB763, but the gross and outrageous lack of civility displayed by the comments of CAIR and Ms. Chaudry justifying the murder of innocent civilians by a terrorist organization whose charter calls for the destruction of Israel. In an era in which debased and vulgar discourse is the norm, it should not be tolerated from members of any public body, much less from members of a hate crimes commission.

Maryland's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention has important work to do. Over the past year, and particularly since October 7, reported hate incidents against both Jews and Muslims have spiked, both in Maryland and across the country. However, the Commission lacks the credibility and the moral authority to address this issue if it is comprised of organizations and individuals who are themselves part of the problem.

No less than arsonists running a fire department, it is absurd and self-defeating for dispensers of hate to serve on a commission to combat hate. By removing CAIR, HB763 is an essential step towards restoring the credibility and moral authority of a Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention which today sorely lacks it.

**ADL MD Written Testimony - HB763 in JPR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meredith Weisel

Position: FAV



Maryland General Assembly  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 27, 2024

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

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) submits this testimony in **support of HB763, Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Membership – Alterations**, which would alter the makeup of the members represented on the commission. We would like to note our original testimony below from the House hearing and express support for the amended version of HB763 now. Although we would have liked to see the bill passed in its original form, and are disappointed that certain organizations are not named anymore, we believe it is crucial that we have representatives on the commission who are willing to be collaborative and show leadership in fighting all forms of hate.

**ADL (the Anti-Defamation League)**

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 and by working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices to effectively address and counter these threats. Further, ADL conducts an annual *Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents*, which is widely used by law enforcement, elected officials, and the community at-large to not only understand how to respond to antisemitic incidents, but how to create change.

Related to this work, ADL has long been recognized as a leading resource on effective responses to violent bigotry, including hate crimes. In 1981, ADL crafted the first model hate crime law in the country, and today, 46 states, as well as the District of Columbia, have hate crime laws, many of which are based on or substantially similar to our model, which was unanimously upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. We were also privileged to lead a broad coalition of civil rights, religious, educational, professional, law enforcement, and civic organizations for more than a decade in support of the 2009 Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA).

**Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention**

During the 2023 Maryland General Assembly session, ADL fully supported **HB1066, Hate Crimes – Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Establishment**, which established a commission to develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity and evaluate state laws and policies relating to hate crimes. As an organization that had been involved in the Attorney General working group on hate crimes and bias incidents from its



inception, we felt it was urgent to formalize the creation of a full commission to carry out this work.

It's important to remember that behind every hate crime statistic, there is a person, a family, a community – dealing with the unimaginable. Hate crimes cause a distinct type of harm that can have a lasting, immeasurable impact. This is because hate crimes target people due to their protected, immutable characteristics – race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, disability – things about a person that are central to identity and cannot be changed.

ADL is proud to be a leading anti-hate organization that has been able to help thousands of people who report hate and bias incidents to us. We are honored to be a part of this Commission entrusted with developing policy solutions to better support communities disproportionately impacted by hate-fueled violence.

### **House Bill 763**

Unfortunately, the work of the Hate Crime Response and Prevention Commission has been disrupted by one organization appointed last year. In addition to concerns that have been raised by community members regarding CAIR's support of parental opt-outs of LGBTQ+-inclusive curricula in Montgomery County, since the brutal massacre in Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> by Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization, there have been many troubling social media posts and statements made by CAIR at both the national level and by CAIR's Maryland Director. Unfortunately, these posts and statements have been part of a pattern denying the larger Jewish community's suffering after the brutal massacre on October 7<sup>th</sup>. This unprovoked war has had a great impact throughout the world, resulting in a close to 400% rise in antisemitic incidents throughout the U.S., including a number of incidents in Maryland.

As leaders trusted with developing policy solutions to counter hate, it's disappointing and concerning that inflammatory rhetoric is being used instead of finding ways to bring people together. We may have disagreements on the policies in Israel and Gaza, but to make posts like "disrupting the Zionist agenda has become a favorite hobby" or calling Hamas terrorists "Palestinian Freedom Fighters" and using Holocaust distortion is deeply concerning for the Jewish community.

Here in Maryland, we have an important obligation and unique opportunity to develop policy solutions that help counter hate targeting all marginalized groups. That is how we build a safer, stronger, and more equitable society in the future. Any Commission set up to respond to and prevent hate crimes and bias in our communities should be comprised of members who are committed to building bridges of understanding across communities and countering identity-based hate whenever and wherever it may arise.

**We urge the Committee to release HB763 with a favorable report.**

# **HB763 as amended Commission on Hate Crime Response**

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FAV

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 Shomrei Emenah Congregation  
 Suburban Orthodox Congregation  
 Temple Beth Shalom  
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 Zionist Organization of America  
 Baltimore District

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**House Bill 763 Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention -  
 Membership and Sunset**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**March 27, 2024**

**Support as Amended**

**Background:** House Bill 763 as amended changes the makeup of the Attorney General's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention so that its representatives are reflective of the goals of the Commission. The amended version removes named organizations, and instead states that 15 individuals who represent or advocate on behalf of individuals who are members of a protected class under the state hate crimes laws will be appointed by the Attorney General.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, all of its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore. The BJC has been part of the Hate Crime Commission in all its previous forms since its creation in 2019 as a work group, to task force, to a legislatively created commission in 2023. The named organizations in the 2023 bill were almost all previous members of the work group. While we all had been able to work together in a respectful manner toward the goal of lowering the rate of hate crimes in our state and developing mechanisms to help victims, one organization has been acting in opposition to that goal and has strategically worked toward increasing hate against both the Jewish and LGBTQ+ communities.

CAIR has systematically been working against inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community both nationally and here in Maryland. In Montgomery County the leader of CAIR Maryland stood with members of Moms for Liberty, protesting against LGBTQ+ inclusion in public schools.<sup>1</sup> This organizational stance goes against the principles of the Commission and further silences its LGBTQ+ members.

While CAIR has had a troubled history with antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric, until the terrorist attacks on October 7<sup>th</sup>, the Jewish community in Maryland had been able to work with CAIR Maryland leadership on both legislative initiatives in Maryland and the Commission. However, in the

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/TimcastNews/status/1694819062331646148>,  
<https://twitter.com/FordFischer/status/1666195811904937998>

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 Zionist Organization of America  
 Baltimore District

aftermath of the largest number of Jews murdered since the Holocaust, CAIR national and CAIR Maryland have been relentless and unapologetic in their antisemitism and flat-out dangerous lies about the war in Israel and Gaza. On the national level, CAIR's leader said he "was happy to see" the terrorist attacks which brutally murdered 1,200 innocent Israeli civilians.<sup>2</sup> He also used dangerous age-old antisemitic tropes to state that Jews control politicians.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the White House and Biden administration removed CAIR from its newly created national strategy on combating antisemitism. If the White House is removing CAIR from its partners against hate, Maryland should as well.

In Maryland, the day after the horrific attacks, and days before Israel launched a counterattack, CAIR Maryland's leader was in front of the White House cheering on the atrocities, and a photo was proudly posted on CAIR National's X page.<sup>4</sup> Since then the leader of CAIR Maryland, who sits on the Commission, has posted hundreds of times on their verified Facebook page with tens of thousands of followers, promoting unabashedly antisemitic rhetoric and dangerously false information about the actions of Israel. They have stated that babies were not actually killed on October 7<sup>th</sup>, that Israel is harvesting organs from Palestinians, and that Jews control politicians. These are all antisemitic ideologies -- Holocaust denial (denial of Jewish deaths), blood libel, and Jewish control of government.<sup>5</sup>

HB763 as amended removes all organizations, including CAIR and entrusts the Attorney General to ensure that Commissioners are working to end hate in Maryland, not perpetuate it.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB763 as amended.

*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.*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/08/us/politics/white-house-cair-nihad-awad.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/nihad-awad-council-american-islamic-relations-israel-gaza-terror-attacks/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/CAIRNational/status/1711158966992941475>

<sup>5</sup> See attached screenshots.

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Past President
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 **Zainab Chaudry**   
 15h · 

Gaza media office: vital organs stolen from 80 bodies of Palestinians returned to Karam Abu Salem border crossing

—  
 "After examining the bodies, it is clear that the features of those killed had changed greatly, in a clear indication that the Israeli occupation had stolen vital organs from them," the statement went on to say.

The media office said this is not the first time that Israel has "mutilated" Palestinian bodies, and has called for an independent international investigation committee into the kidnapping of Palestinian bodies and theft of their vital organs.

'Israel has previously exhumed graves in Jabalia and stole some of the bodies, in addition to the fact that it still has dozens of bodies from the Gaza Strip in its possession,' the office said."

 **Zainab Chaudry**   
 41m · 

it's no surprise that organizations like the ADL who prioritize the interests of the most right wing, fascist administration in the history of Israel, want to smear and silence voices raising awareness about Israel's war crimes and the genocide in Gaza by falsely labeling them as anti-Semitic

but it also shouldn't surprise anyone that lawmakers bought and paid for by Israel's lobbying arm in the United States at every level of the government are also trying to distort, twist and silence us

one could ask where is their humanity, but we already know the answer. you can try to silence one voice, ten voices, but you can't silence millions.

criticism of apartheid, genocide, illegal occupation, settler colonial violence, crimes against humanity isn't antisemitic. it's pro-humanity.

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# **HB 763 Commission on Hate Crime Response and Preve**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Baird

Position: FWA





**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee  
HB763 Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Membership – Alterations  
March 26, 2024 FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings  
2 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman William C. Smith:

I write as the Director of MEF Action, a project of the Middle East Forum, to testify in support with amendments of House Bill 763 – Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention – Membership and Sunset. MEF supports this legislation with strong reservations and calls on the Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings to amend the bill to include language prohibiting members of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) from serving on Maryland’s Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention (“the Commission”).

MEF is an activist think tank committed to advancing American interests in the Middle East and countering extremist groups here at home. To this end, we partner with Muslim reformers and other communities to counter the influence of groups such as CAIR, which falsely claim to represent mainstream and moderate Muslim voices.

HB0763 was originally written “for the purpose of removing the representative of the Council on American–Islamic Relations Maryland Office from the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention.” The bill called for CAIR to be replaced by “two representatives from the Muslim community.” This was a mistake, as Muslims deserve the same organizational support as other groups. Instead of addressing this oversight, the House Judiciary Committee voted to remove institutional representation for all protected classes that are guaranteed a seat on the Commission.

In doing so, the Maryland General Assembly is prepared to send a message that institutional representation is the problem with the Commission – not the conduct of CAIR and its Maryland office director. During a period of exponential growth in bias incidents and hate crimes, especially those impacting the Jewish American community, elected officials must be clear that acts of bigotry will be swiftly and unequivocally condemned.

Although HB0763 effectively removes CAIR-Maryland Director Zainab Chaudry from her



appointed position on the Commission, the Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings should introduce an amendment that formally blocks CAIR from serving on the Commission.

First, Ms. Chaudry's past statements have undermined the Commission's mandate to safeguard protected classes from hate crimes and discrimination. The committee is likely aware that Chaudry compared Israel to Nazi Germany and denied Hamas atrocities, statements for which the CAIR-Maryland Director has refused to apologize. Yet, members of the Senate have probably not heard about a December [Facebook post](#), in which Chaudry cited the Hamas-controlled Gaza media office's claims that Israel was exhuming the bodies of dead Palestinians and harvesting their organs, a classic antisemitic smear. Likewise, the Senate may be unaware that Chaudry [celebrated](#) Houthi terrorist attacks on international shipping.

CAIR's problems are institutional and extend well beyond the conduct of Ms. Chaudry. In December, the White House publicly disavowed CAIR after its founder and senior-most leader Nihad Awad said he was "happy to see" the events of Oct. 7, when Palestinians broke out of the "concentration camp" of Gaza. During testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, CAIR officials summarily dismissed concerns over these remarks, arguing that Awad's statement was taken out of context. They pointed to an op-ed that Awad wrote in response to the fallout over his offensive speech, in which he speciously claimed that he wasn't celebrating the Hamas massacre, but was referring to the "average Palestinians who briefly walked out of Gaza and set foot on their ethnically cleansed land in a symbolic act of defiance..."

Of course, there were no documented acts of civil disobedience on Oct. 7. To accept this justification is to whitewash the brutal slaying of over 1,200 innocent Israelis, including American citizens. CAIR's attempts to excuse and justify Awad's hateful commentary before the House Judiciary Committee, based on this false reimagining of Oct. 7 as a non-violent act of protest, is a textbook example of the evasive and deceitful conduct that characterizes CAIR's public activities.

Most alarmingly, CAIR was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in a landmark terror finance trial in 2007, which resulted in a 65-year prison sentence for Ghassan Elashi, a senior CAIR official from Texas. Hamas has since bartered with the lives of hostages kidnapped on Oct. 7 in exchange for Elashi's release. Moreover, the United Arab Emirates designated CAIR as a terrorist group in 2014 due to its ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood, a violent Islamist movement that includes Hamas.

State legislatures in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida have each passed resolutions condemning CAIR and urging local and state entities to suspend all contact with the nonprofit. Last month, U.S. Rep. Summer Lee withdrew from a CAIR event in Pennsylvania after facing a bipartisan backlash for associating with the Islamic group.

There are many appropriate options among Maryland's Muslim community to replace CAIR on the Commission. MEF recommends that legislators and the attorney general consider Zainab Al-Suwaij of the American Islamic Congress (AIC) as a potential representative of the Muslim community. AIC was founded to combat negative stereotypes targeting Muslim Americans,

focusing on hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims, and Ms. Al-Suwaij has served on a government commission dealing with hate crimes prevention.

MEF supports HB0763 but encourages amendments that retain the original language of the bill, maintaining institutional representation that includes the Muslim community, and permanently barring CAIR as a permanent member of the Commission. We hope you will consider these facts and take a principled stand against bigotry and extremism.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Baird  
Director of MEF Action  
Middle East Forum

# **HB 763 - Hate Crimes Commission Crossover.pdf**

Uploaded by: NaShona Kess

Position: UNF



# NAACP

Maryland  
STATE CONFERENCE

March 27, 2024

Judicial Proceedings  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 763 – Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Membership and Sunset

Members of the Committee:

I write to you as the Executive Director of the Maryland NAACP to express our strong opposition to House Bill 763, which proposes the termination of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. This bill not only threatens the crucial work of this commission but also undermines the vital role it plays in addressing the pressing issues of hate crimes and discrimination in our state.

The proposed termination of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention is deeply concerning, especially in the current socio-political climate where incidents of Islamophobia, antisemitism, and the continued marginalization of Black and Brown communities are on the rise. At a time when hate crimes are escalating, it is imperative that we strengthen our efforts to combat bigotry and intolerance, not dismantle the very institutions tasked with addressing these injustices.

Furthermore, we object to the proposed changes to the composition of the commission, which would replace grassroots organizations with businesses. This alteration fundamentally undermines the intent and effectiveness of the commission. Grassroots organizations are the heartbeat of our communities, with a deep understanding of the issues faced by marginalized groups and the ability to engage directly with those affected. By replacing these organizations with businesses, we risk diluting the commission's ability to effectively serve those most impacted by hate crimes and discrimination.

It is essential to recognize that hate crimes not only inflict harm on individual victims but also threaten the fabric of our society as a whole. The Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention plays a critical role in addressing these crimes, advocating for victims, and promoting policies that foster inclusivity and tolerance in our communities.

Therefore, we urge you to reject House Bill 763 and instead reaffirm your commitment to combating hate crimes by preserving and strengthening the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. Let us stand united in the fight against hate and discrimination, and ensure that Maryland remains a beacon of justice and equality for all its residents.

Thank you for considering our concerns.



# NAACP

*Maryland*  
STATE CONFERENCE

In Service,

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# **Informational Testimony HB 763.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dylan Gugerty

Position: INFO

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**INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL 763**  
**Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Membership and Sunset**  
*Judicial Proceedings*  
**March 27, 2024**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change (SWASC) appreciates the opportunity to inform the discussion on HB 763**, which would change the membership of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention from individuals who represent specific advocacy groups or communities to “15 individuals who represent or advocate on behalf of individuals protected under the Maryland State hate crime laws.” As currently written, HB 763 does not ensure that Marylanders who belong to diversity of classes that are protected by Maryland’s hate crime laws are adequately or equitably represented on the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention.

**As written, HB 763 would allow all members of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention to be representatives of only one class or community protected under Maryland State hate crime laws.** While we do not believe that this is the intention of the bill sponsors and supporters, there is no guarantee that a future Maryland Attorney General would not intentionally and systematically prevent representation of one or another protected class. A virtue of the current membership of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention is that it ensures diverse representation. We believe it is important to maintain adequate and equitable representation - even as specific organizations are no longer represented on the Commission. Equitable representation for all protected groups is crucial for the effective functioning of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. Failing to ensure adequate representation could negatively affect public trust in the Commission and undermine its stated goals. **We believe it is important to include language that ensures diversity among the new 15 members of the Commission.**

**SWASC does not believe the Commission should be sunsetted, especially as there has been a sharp increase in recent incidents of hate crimes in Maryland**, which underscores the need for the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. Maryland has seen a dramatic rise in the number of reported hate crimes over recent years, from 48 reported incidents in 2018 to 200 incidents in 2022 according to data collected by the FBI<sup>1</sup>. The 2022 Maryland Hate Bias Report showed that Maryland experienced an average of 412 hate bias incidents from 2020-2022, and there was a 19.8% increase in the total number of hate bias incidents between 2021 and 2022<sup>2</sup>. Since evidence shows a rising trend in hate crimes, the committee’s continued work

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<sup>1</sup> FBI Crime data explorer (2024) <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Dept. of State Police (2022) <https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Document%20Downloads/2022%20Maryland%20Hate%20Bias%20Report.pdf>



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is crucial. For this reason, we propose an amendment to eliminate the bill's provision to sunset the commission.

**Discriminatory laws are on the rise in many states, including in Maryland.** Many states have recently introduced restrictive legislation that targets groups who are protected under Federal hate crime laws. The ACLU and Southern Poverty Law Center are tracking hundreds of bills across the country that seek to restrict freedoms for such groups<sup>3 4</sup>. Despite the existence of some discriminatory bills that have been brought to the MGA floor, Maryland has stood out in recent years as a state that prioritizes standing up to hate crimes and bias incidents. For example, in 2023 the General Assembly fully funded the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention<sup>5</sup>. Maryland should continue to serve as the model for other states to follow in terms of protecting its citizens against hate crimes; to do so we must have a robust and stable Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention.

**We propose that HB 763 be amended in the following ways.** 1) The bill should include language that clarifies the necessary criteria for membership on the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. 2) Additional language should be included that clarifies the selection process for members of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention by the Maryland Attorney General and includes a provision for community input into the selection process for commission members. 3) Section J of the bill which covers the expiration of the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention should be struck out.

We thank Chair Smith and the Judicial Proceedings Committee for their time and consideration of HB763. **Social Work Advocates for Social Change appreciates the opportunity to submit this informational testimony.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*

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<sup>3</sup> ACLU (2024) <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024>

<sup>4</sup> SPL Center (2024) <https://www.splcenter.org/data-projects/tracking-anti-muslim-legislation-across-us#filters>

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Matters (2023) <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2023/06/01/maryland-attorney-generals-hate-crimes-task-force-gets-permanent-status/>