



February 20, 2024

Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony to OPPOSE HB 0763 Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Membership - Alterations

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

I thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony opposing House Bill 763 Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention - Membership – Alterations, aiming to remove CAIR and myself from the Maryland Attorney General Hate Crimes Commission, and instead instate two other Muslim appointees.

During the date of this hearing, I am committed to join the Maryland leg of the [‘Pilgrimage for Peace’](#) march for ceasefire with rabbis, Black clergy, and interfaith leaders joining the growing chorus of nearly 70 percent of Americans supporting an end to the violence in Gaza and Israel by marching from Philadelphia, PA to Washington, D.C. I plan to try and attend this hearing in person.

In recent days, possibly like you, I have received floods of emails, messages and calls from my community members, friends and allies, deeply alarmed and concerned by the harmful implications of HB0763 that is being perceived as an attack not just on myself or my organization, but also on all those who support equality and human rights.

I appreciate House Speaker Adrienne Jones’ commitment to the Decency Agenda this legislative session. Decency compels us to always raise awareness about injustices, work relentlessly to address them, center marginalized voices and protect all innocent lives.

Hundreds of innocent Israelis died in the horrific attack on October 7, 2023. Since then, over 30,000 innocent Palestinians have been killed in the span of the past several weeks, mostly children and women, using bunker buster bombs and other munitions paid for by billions of our tax dollars. This is the single, most catastrophic loss of life in the 21st century.¹ An average of nearly two hundred children are being massacred in Gaza daily by the Israeli military.

Our country rightfully stood by Ukraine against Russia’s aggression and war crimes. The General Assembly unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution in unwavering solidarity. Our decency compels us to also speak up for millions of innocent Christian and Muslim Palestinians suffering unfathomable atrocities. Words cannot encompass the depth of despair and loss in Gaza, brought on by our tax dollars.

Several of our community members have forwarded me emails from a couple members of this committee stating that you support the removal of myself and CAIR from the Hate Crimes commission because "the White House no longer works with CAIR."

I am submitting testimony on the record to directly address this.

Despite our long track record of speaking out against all forms of hate, including antisemitism, it's true that because of disingenuous attacks against our organization over our advocacy for Palestinian human rights, CAIR is no longer consulted on the White House taskforce on antisemitism.

However, rest assured that we are actively and frequently engaged with partners and agencies on every level of the government. Especially pertaining to matters that impact the safety and security of our communities.

It's been brought to my attention that the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a group that itself has been heavily criticized for its controversial policies and rhetoric (See: <https://droptheadl.org>) and is struggling with a growing internal organizational divide over its unconditional loyalty to Israel,^{2,3} has been spreading disinformation regarding CAIR's advocacy, including sharing a spliced and doctored video of CAIR's National Executive Director's remarks at a conference, that deliberately mischaracterizes his message to make it appear as if he welcomed the horrific attack on October 7. He makes his position clear in the following op-ed to rebut against these disingenuous attacks:

<https://religionnews.com/2023/12/22/as-a-muslim-i-condemn-attacks-on-both-israeli-and-palestinian-civilians-president-biden-should-too/>

During a period of crisis when both of our communities are seeing a tremendous spike in hate, it's disheartening to know that the organization that bills itself as the "leading anti-hate organization in the world" is coordinating indecent attacks to de-platform, smear and manufacture controversies against the nation's largest Muslim civil rights organization – and in turn, against our communities who stand to bear the consequences of these attacks.

The sponsors and groups pushing forward HB0763 have refused to acknowledge the humanity, pain, loss and suffering of Christian and Muslim Palestinian constituents in their districts and communities. They have not publicly condemned the unprecedented surge of Islamophobia or anti-Arab hate, fueled in part by the relentless, deadly dehumanization of these communities. Dehumanization that has contributed to the murders of innocent Palestinians in our country, including young 6-year-old Palestinian American Wadea Al-Fayoumy, who was brutally and fatally stabbed 26 times in his own apartment in Chicago by his landlord in a shocking hate crime.⁴

But we do not take a page from their playbook. Decency demands that we value all human life. CAIR's and my record on anti-Semitism is clear and strong. What's also clear is that groups like the ADL have uncritically pledged their loyalty to Israel - a government which the International Court of Justice and a U.S. federal judge have both said is credibly committing genocide against Palestinians.

These groups are increasingly censoring, erasing and punishing anyone who defends their basic rights and freedoms.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/news/2024/jan/05/adl-pro-israel-advocacy-zionism-antisemitism>

<https://newrepublic.com/post/177993/adl-abandons-pretense-tracking-antisemitism-honestly-palestine-rallies>

I myself am not Palestinian. But I have advocated on behalf of many Muslim and Christian Palestinians, mostly students and children, who are directly and viscerally impacted by the ongoing assault on their identities across the state. Their humanity and experiences matter.

The attacks on CAIR are rooted in a desire to silence our voices, control our platforms and erase our advocacy for human rights.

Decency demands that these attacks not be successful.

My advocacy is rooted in my faith, and my faith guides me to stand up and to speak up for all, regardless of how much others may try to obstruct it. Are Palestinians – both Christians and Muslims – not worthy of inclusion, security and respect? Do they not deserve to have access to equal rights and freedoms like all of us?

Confronting the extent of injustices can be uncomfortable. But growth, accountability and justice seldom occur in spaces of comfort.

Many communities - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, secular - have been experiencing an onslaught of distress over HB0763. While the indecent attacks against me and my organization won't discourage my advocacy for all those who are oppressed, marginalized and wronged, it's personally very difficult to witness how deeply my communities, friends and allies are affected by the prospect of this committee supporting bad faith attacks against me or the suppression of Palestinians' humanity by voting for HB0763.

Passing this bill out of committee wouldn't only draw us one step closer to silencing my communities' and allies' voices, it would be a betrayal of their trust, render them more vulnerable to hate and unfortunately undermine the Commission's objectives.

You have the right to vote according to your conscience. I simply encourage you to center their concerns and perspectives, value their humanity too, support protecting all innocent life, and vote according to facts. Not propaganda, sensationalized allegations, smear attacks or baseless accusations intended to silence and erase anyone.

Ten years ago, I left a career as a shock trauma/critical care pharmacist to come work for CAIR. It's an honor to serve in a capacity that is rooted in decency and humanity and aligns with my faith and values. It's deeply humbling to have opportunities to impact lives through this work.

I plan to continue working tirelessly to advocate, interface and engage with partners at every level of the government on behalf of those I serve. My platforms, titles and degrees are only meaningful if they're applied to uplift those who are silenced, oppressed and marginalized.

If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to contact me anytime.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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1. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/11/gaza-daily-deaths-exceed-all-other-major-conflicts-in-21st-century-oxfam>
2. <https://truthout.org/articles/adl-staff-internally-dissent-over-groups-targeting-of-pro-palestine-advocates/>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2024/jan/05/adl-pro-israel-advocacy-zionism-antisemitism>
4. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/16/us/chicago-muslim-boy-stabbing-investigation/index.html>