

HB0763  
Unfavorable

Samya Mohammad  
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Edgewater, MD 21037

Dear Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair J. Sandy Bartlett and Judiciary committee members,

My name is Samya Mohammad and I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 0763. I am a physician, a local community organizer, and a Muslim resident of Anne Arundel County. It is deeply disappointing and discouraging to see a bill introduced to exclude the representative of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Maryland Office from the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention during a time of increased islamophobia and racism against those who are visibly Muslim, Arab, brown or black. Impacted communities of hate crimes have a right to have their own vehicle of representation and empowerment which cannot be dictated to them by others.

CAIR has a long-standing history of being the main voice for the Maryland Muslim community to address hate crimes. This organization has spent decades investing in our local muslim communities and it is our source of reporting any incidents of a hate bias or a hate crime that may happen in our community. Zainab Chaudry is a respected figure in our community who we feel safe sharing our most vulnerable experiences with and has tirelessly advocated for so many in our community. Removing CAIR in essence is calling for the erasure and silencing of Muslim voices in Maryland and undercuts the very purpose of this commission.

This bill proposes not only the removal of CAIR, a civil rights and advocacy group, but also goes on to ask for the addition of two members of the Muslim community to be appointed by the Attorney General. The goal is to remove an actual organization that works essentially to advocate for Muslims targeted by hate crimes with two people who happen to be Muslim. Any community would want the best representation, not just token representation. The fact is the sponsors of this bill cannot name another organization that works at the level of CAIR in supporting Muslim victims of hate crimes. They think it is sufficient to just have two random Muslims on the commission and our community will feel valued. Clearly they do not value their Muslim constituents enough to understand the long term damage already committed by the introduction of this bill.

The Muslim community in Maryland views this bill to be in bath faith and punitive in nature. It is meant to target CAIR for its advocacy for Palestinians and specifically on the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Truth be told, any Muslim representative who holds any grain of value in our community or is seen as a representative will be advocating for Palestinians in Gaza. The unfortunate political climate is such that advocating for Palestinians will lead some to feel uncomfortable and have hurt feelings. We do not remove voices and advocates for marginalized communities because some conversations are too challenging or too

uncomfortable. As leaders we should take these as opportunities to listen, learn and grow. If this commission is meant to have any value and serve a purpose for our community then we should have a valid voice that has worked on every level of the government to address bias against communities impacted by hate.

I humbly ask this committee to oppose HB0763 as it sends the wrong message to Maryland Muslims that they do not matter, that hate crimes against them are unimportant and they are undeserving of proper advocacy. I strongly believe this committee does not hold these notions to be true and will see how harmful such actions are to marginalized communities in building trust with their elected representatives and with special commissions dealing with such an important topic as hate crimes.

Sincerely,

Dr. Samya Mohammad, D.O.