



February 13, 2024

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

Re: Testimony SUPPORTING HB 0555 Unauthorized Dissemination of Personal Identifying Information - Prohibition

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members,

I write to you today not only as the Director of Advocacy of Justice For All but also as someone who has personally faced the threats and fears associated with transnational repression and doxxing. My experiences have given me a firsthand understanding of the urgent need for robust legal protections against the unauthorized dissemination of personal identifying information. Therefore, I strongly support House Bill 0555 and urge its passage into law.

This bill is vital for safeguarding individuals in Maryland from a form of harassment that is not only invasive but also potentially life-threatening. The act of doxxing, which involves publishing private or identifying information about an individual without their consent, often with malicious intent, is a threat that looms large over activists, dissidents, and indeed, any person who may find themselves at odds with powerful interests or aggressive individuals.

[In Maryland](#)¹, there have been instances where people who have been doxxed suffered immensely. Victims have faced harassment, both online and offline, leading to mental health crises, physical violence, and in severe cases, being forced into hiding to protect their safety. For example, activists working on sensitive social issues have found their home addresses and personal phone numbers spread across the internet, leading to threatening visits and calls. Young professionals have had their employment jeopardized by the spread of false or misleading information, severely impacting their lives and careers.

¹<https://wjla.com/news/local/islamophobia-maryland-hate-bias-incidents-report-free-speech-islam-arabic-muslim-israel-hamas-conflict-american-relations-council-cair-schools-workplaces-restaurants-online-doxxing-threats-baltimore-prince-georges-howard-montgomery-washington-county>

A report highlighted over 200 instances of bias against Maryland Muslims and Arabs, with 17% involving doxxing. This indicates that doxxing is a recognized form of harassment and bias within the state, affecting specific communities.

House Bill 0555 stands as a beacon of hope for those who have suffered and for those who live in the fear of being targeted as the act of doxxing itself is not illegal in Maryland. By prohibiting the unauthorized dissemination of personal identifying information with the intent to threaten, intimidate, abuse, harass, or frighten, or to place individuals in reasonable fear of death or serious bodily injury, this bill provides a clear legal recourse. Furthermore, the establishment of penalties is a critical step towards deterring would-be doxxers, demonstrating the state's commitment to protecting its citizens from this form of digital violence.

The passage of HB 0555 would send a strong message that Maryland values the safety and privacy of all its residents. It acknowledges the evolving nature of threats in the digital age and puts forth necessary measures to combat them. This bill is not just about penalizing wrongdoers; it's about preventing harm, safeguarding mental health, and ensuring that everyone can participate in public discourse without fear of retribution.

I urge the legislature to pass House Bill 0555 into law. It is a necessary step to protect the lives of young people, activists, and all residents of Maryland from the tangible harms that result from doxxing. Let us stand together in support of privacy, safety, and justice.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

Hena Zuberi

Director of Advocacy

Justice For All

