

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 0555, prohibiting the Unauthorized Dissemination of Personal Identifying Information.

My name is Yara Changyit-Levin, and I have been a grassroots activist since I was six years old. That is to say, my earliest memories of political advocacy took place when I was in kindergarten, but the truth is that my mother started me out much earlier than that.

My mother became a stay-at-home parent when I was born, quitting her job in engineering and spending a lot more time changing my diapers and listening to NPR reports about crises in faraway countries. She could have felt helpless and turned off the news, but she chose to teach herself how to take action. And she saw no reason to leave her child out of her activism. Even when I was just a toddler, she brought me along to meetings and taught me to write letters to Congress. I grew up telling members of Congress that the Child Tax Credit helps alleviate poverty, and that foreign policy regarding global health can only be successful if international HIV/AIDS programs focus on the most vulnerable communities.

My childhood spent in lobby meetings, protests, and town halls is the reason I now major in Public Health and Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University.

In a country where active shooters can burst into elementary school classrooms at any moment, climate change is destroying our health and our futures, and everyone in the world has access to videos of Palestinians being murdered on our social media feeds, the most important classroom a young person can have is a grassroots movement.

When I was in middle school and high school, my life's work as a teenager was to get other teenagers involved in advocacy. I held letter-writing workshops for my classmates and founded a nonpartisan "Political Action Club" that taught basic advocacy skills. But it wasn't the easiest pitch to make. Even kids are aware that speaking out publicly on issues you believe in can put you in danger, and many parents are understandably cautious.

I first saw a friend get doxxed when I was fourteen years old. They were in college at the time, and their information was published by Canary Mission, the infamous doxxing operation that targets anti-Zionist students and professors. Fortunately, my friend was able to get through that scary time with family support, and the allegations that their support of Palestine could be interpreted as anti-semitic clearly didn't stick. Both this friend and I are proudly anti-Zionist and Jewish ourselves.

There's something different about protesting genocide in Gaza. When I protest climate change, I never fear for my safety. But Palestinian students and anti-Zionist activists are in danger of

losing their jobs and physical harm, anti-Zionist activists are unfairly targeted for expressing their first amendment rights to free speech and Palestinians denied their human rights to simply exist.

I have to weigh risks every time I take political action, and this is nothing new to me. I will be honest, I'm afraid of being doxxed and stalked and targeted. But I know that I wield significant privilege that will protect me if it ever happens. People living in poverty, who don't have thousands of extra dollars lying around if they suddenly lose their job, are disproportionately affected by the issue of doxxing. Palestinians in America, targeted by dangerous and life-threatening hate crimes, are disproportionately affected. This is a justice issue not just because of the topics activists are speaking about, but also the identities of the activists themselves.

I am proud to be here today, testifying alongside the Council on American-Islamic Relations, because they have a valuable resource to students on my own campus. They have stepped up to protect Muslim students across the country when so many institutions are failing to. Their perseverance and commitment to justice is unwavering, so when they tell me that HB0555 being passed would make their job easier, the clear thing to do is join in.

Making doxxing illegal will go a long way to protect Maryland constituents. I know that it would make a difference on my own college campus, where the discussion around doxxing has been ongoing since October 7 and various authorities all throw their hands up, saying they can't technically do anything to help us.

When Hopkins students walked out of class on October 30, 2023, one of our four demands was for JHU to "publicly condemn Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism on all Hopkins campuses" and "Hold individuals accountable for instances of doxxing, intimidation, and punishment of Black, Brown, Muslim, and pro-Palestine voices." Our university might be better able to take action on this issue if we the students have the support of the Maryland General Assembly.

Doxxing contributes to a climate of fear and oppression in this country. It disproportionately hurts marginalized communities in Maryland – those who because of poverty or their marginalized identity do not have the privileges of shaking off a doxxing incident unscathed. Doxxing is a cowardly tool used by oppressors to silence exactly the people who most need to be speaking out, and it is a tool that the Maryland General Assembly can take away by passing HB0555.

I urge each and every one of you to support HB 0555. Thank you for your valuable time.

Sincerely,

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