



February 16, 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:

On behalf of **Baltimore Jewish Voice for Peace**, I thank you for this opportunity to **testify in strong opposition to House Bill 763**, which aims to remove CAIR and its representative from the Maryland Attorney General Hate Crimes Commission and instate two other Muslim appointees.

Jewish Voice for Peace is a grassroots Jewish organization working toward freedom and justice for Palestinians and Israelis, with over 700,000 members and supporters nationwide. As Jewish Marylanders, Baltimore Jewish Voice for Peace strongly opposes this effort to remove CAIR and its Maryland Director, Zainab Chaudry, from the Hate Crimes Commission.

CAIR is the US's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. CAIR is the main Muslim organization in Maryland that tracks hate bias incidents and provides advocacy and legal assistance to the state's Muslim communities.

CAIR's work is vital in this moment of heightened Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism and anti-Palestinian hate. No one is better suited to represent Maryland's Muslims than the group that has been the strongest local voice against Islamophobia hate crimes.

Each community should be able to decide who represents it, and Zainab Chaudry has the support of her community. Dozens of Islamic faith-based organizations and institutions have written to the Office of the Attorney General in support of keeping CAIR and Zainab Chaudry on the Commission, along with thousands of community members.

Removing CAIR from this Commission effectively silences the many Muslims in Maryland who have stood up in support of Zainab Chaudry over the past few months. We know that she brings a perspective to the Hate Crimes Commission that will not be present if she were removed.

Part of what Dr. Chaudry brings to the table is a consistent and principled stance in support of Palestinian human rights and freedom. This advocacy has meant she's faced smear attacks, death threats, and seemingly endless hate.

Support for Palestinians is not hateful. Many Jews, including myself, the rest of Jewish Voice for Peace Baltimore, and many people in our community, support Palestinians, especially in this moment when Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are under such intense attack. We refuse to equate advocacy for Palestinians with antisemitism.

We know, as Jews, how important it is to stand together with our Muslim family, friends, and neighbors right now, when both of our communities are at heightened risk of hate crimes. We know that Jews and Muslims are safer and stronger when we support one another.

Zainab Chaudry and CAIR have a long history of intersectional work within and beyond Muslim communities, including showing up for our community against antisemitism. We know that she has our community's back. When she is under attack, we have hers.

As Jews, we stand by CAIR and Zainab Chaudry and their continued presence on the Maryland Hate Crimes Commission. We respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB 0763.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Hannah Pursley,
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