

February 8, 2024
Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB555 Criminal Law - Unauthorized Dissemination of Personal Identifying Information - Prohibition

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 0555 Unauthorized Dissemination of Personal Identifying Information. I am here as both a college student and an intern at the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

I am writing to provide testimony on the critical importance of safeguarding students and protestors from what is commonly called doxxing—the dissemination of an individual’s private information in the effort to threaten or harm them, particularly in light of the alarming increase in harassment and doxxing of students when they show support for the Palestinian cause.

Protests, demonstrations, and generally using our first amendment right to express one’s opinion on any issue is incredibly important. However, students have not felt comfortable in exercising this right because of the threat of being put in immediate danger. Since October 7th, students have been watching their peers have all of their information leaked online and then subsequently receive death threats and, sometimes, face escalations in-person. All because of a few instagram posts in support of Palestine, let alone attending protests or demonstrations.

Not only does this create fear and hesitance in students when practicing their right to protest, but it undermines American values. The issue of doxxing is not one that only applies to the Palestinian cause. If we do not address this now, it could become something that silences the American people on all issues.

This legislation has personal significance to me as well. Over the past few months, I have received multiple threats to reveal personal information of mine if I do not stop posting on Instagram about Palestine. I have been forced to wear masks to all the protests and demonstrations I attend out of fear of having a picture taken and being identified through just that. I have had to work with so many students who have been absolutely terrified to say anything, simply because they know others who have been doxxed.

It is imperative that we take decisive action to protect students and ensure that they are able to practice their first amendment right without fear of being threatened or hurt. The proposed legislation to establish prohibit unauthorized dissemination of certain personal information is an important deterrent and a step in this direction.

By making it clear that threatening or harming people in order to silence them, we send a strong message that such behavior will not be tolerated in our society. Moreover, we uphold American

values established in the bill of rights and deter individuals from engaging in such reprehensible acts.

In conclusion, protecting Americans from threats and harm is not only a matter of safeguarding individual safety but also of defending the integrity and credibility of our democratic process. I urge you to support HB0555 and take concrete steps to ensure that everyone is able to practice their first amendment right without fear or intimidation.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this important issue Sincerely,

Dua Hussain.

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