



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

February 20, 2024

Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: HB 763 – Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention –
Membership-Alterations

Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP. We oppose House Bill 763, Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Membership Alterations. We ask that all members of the committee oppose this legislation as it seeks to remove the representative Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) Maryland Office from the Commission on Hate Crime Response.

This legislation introduced by Delegates Attar, Vogel and Rosenberg is a direct attack against CAIR over its advocacy in support of Palestine. CAIR's mission is to protect civil rights, enhance understanding of Islam, promote justice and empower American Muslims. Removing CAIR from the commission is a bad faith means to attack CAIR for their willingness to speak out against the regimes that seek to impede the civil and human rights of Palestine and Palestinians.

This bill seeks to amend the Code of Maryland Article – State Government 6-802.

Notwithstanding the exception of “two members of the general public” and “Asian American and Pacific Islander Community”, the commission members listed under 6-802 (b) consist of members from coalitions, councils and other organizations that represent specific groups, including minorities. The members include: Anti-Defamation League; Women’s Law Center; Baltimore Jewish Council; Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism; Free State Justice; Jewish Community Relations Council; Immigration Outreach Service Center; Maryland Association of Human Relations/Human Rights Agencies; Maryland Chiefs of Police Association; Maryland commission on Civil Rights; Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center; Maryland Center for School Safety; Maryland Sheriffs’ Association; Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association; National Alliance of Mental Illness; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Pride Center of Maryland; and Sikh Coalition. This amendment seeks to **REMOVE** the only council that represents the Islamic and Muslim community and replace it with “two representatives of the Muslim Community”. This is substantially out of sync with the membership and make-up of the commission, which is evidence to show that the purpose of

this bill is to remove CAIR as a coordinated effort to further condemn the organization and their executive director, Dr. Zainub Chaudry, for its stance on the Israel and Palestine conflict.

In or around November 2023, the Attorney General suspended the Executive Director of CAIR, Dr. Zainub Chaudry, however, she was later reinstated by the Attorney General's office. On the issue of the suspension, the AG's office stated that "the AG office lacked the authority from the legislation creating the commission to remove or suspend a commissioner during their 4-year term of service" (WMAR 2 Baltimore). The Attorney General's Offices further stated "...the Attorney General will distribute draft operating guidelines to members which include personal communications and how to balance the members' right to freedom of speech and their role as commissioners for their review and feedback". Since the AGO lacked the ability to continue the suspension, we believe this bill acts as an alternative to remove the organization all together. The removal coupled with the evidence of obvious dissention further demonstrates that the purpose of this bill is to excommunicate or strip away a specific group from the commission with mal intent.

In addition to its support for Palestine and the wider Muslim community, CAIR has a history of condemning any all acts of hate like Neo-Nazi and Anti-Semitic acts. You can find these remarks on their website at <https://www.cair.com/?s=antisemitic>. CAIR is an advocate for the community on the prevention of all hate crimes and should remain on the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention in the Office of the Attorney General.

We encourage the Committee to oppose HB 763 to ensure CAIR remains on the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. Thank you.

In Service,

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