

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:

I am **testifying in opposition to House Bill 763**, which proposes to remove CAIR and its representative from the Maryland Attorney General Hate Crimes Commission.

I am a Jewish Marylander, I've lived in District 43A for 17 years, I'm an active member of my community, worshipping at the Jewish congregation in Hinenu, and active over my years here in several civil rights and social justice organizations. I have had the opportunity to visit the offices of members of this committee before.

I want to make it clear that speaking up for Palestinian lives and liberation is not anti-Jewish, and neither is recognizing the decades of history of Israeli ethnic cleansing and apartheid toward Palestinians. Those claiming to speak for the Jewish community saying otherwise do not speak for me or the growing numbers of Jews who share my values.

The attacks on CAIR are part of a coordinated smear campaign meant to punish any statements in support of Palestinian rights, and become part of a larger effort to discipline and control expression for Palestinian rights, involving soliciting government repression of speech, organized campaigns of personal harassment and threats, and creating a climate of fear of punishment for expressing disapproved political opinions.

When our entire nation is in a precarious position right now, where democracy, pluralism, freedom of expression, and multiculturalism are being threatened by anti-democratic forces, these efforts to control pro-Palestinian speech are helping to build structures of repression and attacking norms around freedom of expression and pluralism that will leave an ongoing anti-democratic legacy effecting Marylanders for a generation.

This will not keep Jews, Muslims, other minorities, or any Marylanders at all safer. The choices you make here today affect not only Palestinian lives, but will be remembered for how they affect our ongoing crisis of democracy.

We respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB 0763.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rochkind
755 Melville Ave
Baltimore MD, 21218