

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 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.

As a homeowner and full time resident of Maryland, I strongly oppose 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 people, including myself and many others in my community (including my Jewish neighbors and friends,) support Palestinians, especially at this moment when Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are under such intense attack. We refuse to equate advocacy for Palestinians with antisemitism.

As the mother of a biracial daughter (who appears, to most people, to be Black, and who herself has close friendships with many Latino Marylanders,) I know how important it is to stand against hate crime in *all* of its forms. It is important that residents of Maryland, together with our legislative representatives, support our Muslim family, friends, and neighbors right now, when so many communities are at a heightened risk of hate crimes.

Zainab Chaudry and CAIR have a long history of intersectional work within and beyond Muslim communities, including showing up for Jews, African Americans and Latino communities against hate crime. Whoever you are, you know that she has your community's back. When she is under attack, we have hers.

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

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Eleanor Hancock
4702 Longfellow St
Riverdale Park, MD 20737