

Ruba Abukhdeir

Written testimony against HB1462

Hello,

Chair and members of the committee. My name is Ruba Abukhdeir, and I am here today as a Palestinian American mother who believes in the freedoms and democratic values that make this country great. I came here because I want my children to grow up in a nation that encourages open dialogue and respects the right to dissent, not one that punishes students for standing up for justice.

HB 1462 claims to promote inclusivity and protect students, but in reality, it threatens the very principles of free speech and academic freedom. The bill's vague definitions of harassment and intimidation leave too much room for subjective interpretation. We have seen across the country how similar policies are used to silence students advocating for Palestinian human rights. When institutions are required to report and monitor speech in this way, students may become afraid to express their beliefs, fearing retaliation or punishment simply for speaking out.

As a mother, I want my children to attend universities where they are challenged, where they learn to debate, and where they are encouraged to think critically. I do not want them to be taught that standing up for human rights is dangerous or that speaking about injustices could lead to disciplinary action.

If this bill passes, the message it sends is clear: Some voices are welcome, and others are not. That is not the kind of democracy or the kind of future I want for my children or for any student in Maryland.

I urge you to vote against HB 1462 and ensure that Maryland's campuses remain spaces of true learning, discussion, and growth and to uphold the fundamental rights that have made this country a beacon of free speech and democracy.

Thank you,

Ruba Abukhdeir