



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

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Chair Sandy Bartlett
House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1184 Civil Actions - Nonprofit Organizations - Unauthorized Support of Israeli Settlement Activity (Not On Our Dime Act)

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Maryland (CAIR), we respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 1184, the Not on Our Dime Act, which aims to prohibit nonprofit organizations operating in Maryland from supporting illegal Israeli settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territories in violation of international law. CAIR is the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. Our mission includes protecting civil rights, promoting justice, and advancing policies that are equitable, humane and fair.

This legislation reflects a simple but vital principle: charitable donations raised in Maryland should not be used to facilitate violations of international law or harm civilians living under military occupation. HB 1184 ensures that nonprofit organizations registered to solicit donations in Maryland do not knowingly aid or abet activities, including settlement expansion, violence against protected civilians, and the destruction of civilian property and infrastructure in the occupied West Bank.

This legislation is rooted in well-established legal principles. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into occupied territory. The international community - including the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 2334 (2016) - has repeatedly affirmed that Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity and constitute a violation of international law.

In addition, numerous international human rights organizations - including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - have documented ongoing patterns of violence by settlers against Palestinian civilians, destruction of homes and agricultural lands, forced displacement, and attacks on essential civilian infrastructure. These acts harm civilians protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention and undermine the rule of law.

HB 1184 does not target individuals or restrict speech. Rather, it addresses financial facilitation of unlawful activity. The bill simply states that organizations raising charitable funds in Maryland should not knowingly support activities that involve war crimes, unlawful settlement expansion, or violence against protected persons. Just as Maryland law prohibits charitable funds from being used to support terrorism, fraud, or other unlawful activity, it is reasonable and appropriate to ensure that charitable funds are not used to enable internationally recognized violations of humanitarian law.

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Importantly, this bill also strengthens transparency and accountability for charitable organizations operating in our state. Maryland residents donate generously to nonprofit causes with the expectation that their contributions will support humanitarian, educational, or charitable purposes - not activities linked to displacement of civilians or destruction of civilian property.

For many Marylanders, including Palestinian Americans and Muslim Americans, the issues addressed in this bill are deeply personal. Families in our communities have relatives living in the West Bank who experience the direct consequences of settlement expansion, land confiscation, home demolitions, and restrictions on access to farmland, water, and basic services. Ensuring that charitable funds raised here do not contribute to such harms is both a moral obligation and a matter of legal consistency.

HB 1184 affirms that Maryland will not allow charitable structures within our jurisdiction to be used to support actions that undermine internationally recognized human rights protections.

For these reasons, CAIR Maryland respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1184.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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