



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

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February 19, 2026

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

Re: Testimony In Support of HB566 Distribution of Students' Personal Information - Prohibition

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Imam Talib Abdus Samad. I serve on CAIR's Maryland Advisory Board and also as an Imam and faith leader in Maryland. Every week, I counsel students, parents, and families. I sit with young people who are trying to find their place in this world - who want to learn, grow, speak their minds, and contribute positively to society.

Increasingly, I hear of students who are afraid because their private information - their home address, their phone number, their personal photos - has been posted online without their consent. Or because strangers are sending threats.

This is what doxxing does. Doxxing is not debate. It is not protest or free speech. It is the weaponization of someone's personal information in order to intimidate, threaten, or silence them.

As a faith leader, I have seen the spiritual and emotional damage this causes. In too many cases, students cannot sleep. They stop attending class. They withdraw from leadership roles and even who question whether their lives were worth living.

No young person should ever feel that way because someone decided to "expose" them online.

Across Maryland, students from many backgrounds - Muslim, Jewish, Black, immigrant, Arab, and others - have been targeted. Often, it happens after they speak up about an issue, run for student government, or take part in campus activism. They are not targeted because they broke a law. They are targeted because someone disagreed with them.

That is not how we teach our children to resolve disagreement.

In my faith tradition, we are taught that human dignity is sacred. We are taught that harming someone's reputation or safety is a grave moral wrong, and that justice requires protecting the vulnerable.

Right now, there is a gap in our law.

In cases at the University of Maryland, students received death threats after being doxxed. Campus police acknowledged the harm - but said their hands were tied. No law had been broken. The students were left to suffer alone.

House Bill 566 simply closes that gap.

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It does not criminalize political speech, punish criticism or silence protest.

It focuses narrowly on the malicious release of a student's private identifying information when done with the intent to cause harm - or reckless disregard for that harm.

That distinction matters.

The First Amendment protects speech - even controversial speech. But it has never protected threats, stalking, harassment, or conduct that puts someone in danger. This bill respects constitutional boundaries while recognizing that personal data can be used as a weapon.

As any pastor, rabbi, imam, or minister would tell you, safety and freedom are not opposites. In fact, safety is what allows freedom to flourish.

Students cannot fully participate in debate, activism, or academic life if they fear retaliation through exposure of their personal data. Protecting them from doxxing protects the very marketplace of ideas our Constitution envisions.

I am especially concerned because we have seen what happens when digital harassment goes unchecked. Maryland acted before after a tragic loss in the case of Grace McComas. We updated our laws to address cyberbullying.

We should not wait for another tragedy before addressing doxxing.

This bill says clearly: You may disagree. You may debate or protest. But you may not weaponize someone's private information to harm them.

As someone who serves students every week, who hears fears, and sees tears, and prays with families, I urge you to give House Bill 566 a favorable report.

Let Maryland continue to lead, not by silencing speech, but by drawing a clear moral and legal line between expression and exploitation.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to protecting our students.

Imam Talib Abdus Samad
CAIR Maryland Advisory Board
Council on American-Islamic Relations

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