



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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January 29, 2020

Honorable Senator William Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0161 – Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or a Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate

Good afternoon Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee;

My name is Eimaan Imran and on behalf of the Council of American Islamic Relations, I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 161 introduced by Senator Sarah Elfreth et al, entitled “Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate.” Two weeks ago, I testified in support of House Bill 0005, the cross-filed version of this bill, sponsored by Delegate Chang.

CAIR is the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization and is dedicated to protecting civil rights, promoting justice, empowering American Muslims, and enhancing the understanding of Islam. As an organization, we monitor and track the prevalence and incidence of hate crimes and bias motivated incidents across the nation. Over the past several years, we have noticed a steady increase in the onslaught of institutional and individual prejudice against American Muslims, especially against African and Black Muslims who according to Pew research, make up at least 1/5th of the American Muslim population.

In recent months, we have condemned and denounced several bias motivated incidents, some of which happened right here in Anne Arundel County. There was a noose found at the U.S. naval academy down the street from here, swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti that threatened violence reported in a boys’ bathroom at Severn River Middle School, and a racist effigy found on the property of a former Maryland county councilman to name a few. Acts of blatant hate such as these only embolden racism and the white supremacist ideologies that led to the most shameful and painful chapters in our country’s history.

With the sheer number of bias motivated incidents within the past few years, this bill is necessary to protect Maryland’s citizens and promote public safety. Hate is mainstream in our

society today, and it is our responsibility to push it back to the fringes where it belongs. This bill sets the tone for accountability, and we believe that it will help discourage such behavior in the future. Therefore, we ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 161.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
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