



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger Chair, House Judiciary Committee 101 House Office Building 6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401	Senator William C. Smith, Jr. Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee 2 East Miller Senate Office Building 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401
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Re: Testimony is SUPPORT of HB485/SB989 – Criminal Law- Hate Crimes – Penalty (Educate Against Hate Act)

Dear Committee Chairs:

On behalf of the Council on American Islamic Relations, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB485/SB989 - entitled “Criminal Law- Hate Crimes- Penalty (Educate Against Hate Act)” introduced by Delegate Vaughn Stewart and Senators Susan Lee and Shelly Hettleman.

CAIR is the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. We are dedicated to protecting civil rights, enhancing the understanding of Islam, promoting justice and empowering Muslim communities to be more engaged members of society. As an organization, we monitor and track the incidents of hate crimes and bias motivated incidents across the country. Over the last few years, we have seen a steady increase in both individual and institutional prejudice towards the American Muslim community, particularly against the African and Black Muslim communities who comprise 1/5 of the American Muslim population.

Unfortunately, the basis for many acts of hatred and intolerance is a lack of education and understanding about the religion, race, ethnicity or other distinguishing characteristic. When we discuss solutions to eradicate racism, a large portion of our efforts must be directed towards education and socialization.

Education is a powerful tool to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. It can help create a society that doesn’t simply “tolerate” those who are different, but, rather in fact, teaches people to welcome them. This measure ensures that a perpetrator of a hate crime goes through the justice system and is required to take a class that teaches the value of diversity and enhances their understanding relating to the group targeted by their hatred.

We live in a time where many communities feel vulnerable. Hate is mainstream in our society, but together we can push it back to the fringes where it belongs. It is our responsibility to ensure that the State of Maryland is indeed a state for all. This bill addresses the deep-rooted issues of intolerance and prejudice. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 485/SB 989.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
Director, CAIR Office in Maryland
Council on American-Islamic Relations