



January 28, 2021

Honorable Senator Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB52 Public Health - Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021)

Dear Chair Delores G. Kelley and Senate Finance Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate bill 52 entitled Public Health - Maryland Commission on Health Equity. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Racism has been on the forefront of this past year, however there are many consequences of racism, and health inequity is one of them. Research shows that ethnic minorities and people of color tend to have access to lower quality of health compared with others. In fact, according to the Center for American Progress, African-Americans are less likely to have health insurance and also have the highest mortality rate for all cancers.¹

These health inequities are partly due to poverty, less access to affordable medical care, and discrimination in the health care system. They have been especially harmful during the coronavirus pandemic over the last year, where countless reports and studies have exposed racial disparities and shown that communities of color – particularly African-American communities – are disproportionately adversely impacted by COVID-19 infections.

This bill will take a step towards fighting health inequity by making sure health disparities are recognized and addressed. These health disparities are exacerbated by racism and contribute to societal inequities. We believe a designated commission tasked with fact-finding and reporting will help promote positive outcomes and reduce health disparities in the state of Maryland by identifying and correcting the factors that lead to health inequity.

We support this measure and urge your vote in favor of it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Huzzaifa Muhammad
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Council on American-Islamic Relations
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References:

1. Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2020/05/07/484742/health-disparities-race-ethnicity/> Accessed January 19, 2021.