



February 17, 2021

Honorable Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health & Govt. Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB533 – State Government - Prevention of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity and the Commission on Genocide Prevention

Dear Chair Shane E. Pendergrass and House Health & Govt. Operations Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill **533** entitled State Government - Prevention of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity and the Commission on Genocide Prevention. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

According to Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide under the United Nations' Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, genocide is defined as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Currently, there are several documented cases of nations around the world engaging in the systematic destruction of ethnic minority groups and unspeakable crimes against humanity - including Myanmar and China.

This bill aims to make sure Marylanders' tax dollars are spent in an ethical way by directing the state to only enter into contracts and do business with those corporations which have adopted a formal policy of refusing to do business with genocidal regimes.

This bill also aims to establish the Maryland Commission on Genocide Prevention. The purpose of this commission is to conduct research on governments around the world and identify which governments are at risk of committing genocide or crimes against humanity. This commission will then hold hearings on the implementation of the Act and ensure that Maryland taxpayer dollars are spent in accordance with Maryland values.

This bill will communicate to corporations that Maryland is committed to protecting human rights around the world and that our state will not enter into business with any corporation that conducts business with genocidal regimes. It will also officially ensure that the State of Maryland joins entities around the world who use ethical purchasing practices to influence corporations to help end genocide.

City and statewide “End Genocide” laws have a long tradition of effecting positive change. **We support this bill because it sets the tone for equal human rights, and we believe it will help discourage crimes against humanity in the future. Therefore, we respectfully urge your vote in favor of it.** Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Huzzaifa Muhammad
Government Affairs Intern, CAIR Office in Maryland
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Email: huzzaifamhammad@gmail.com