

Joseph A. Solomon
Hyattsville City Council
4310 Gallatin Street
Hyattsville, MD 20782

The Honorable William Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Senate Office Building,
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Favorable with Amendments of SB953 – Domestic Terrorism Task Force

I strongly urge the committee to support the establishment of the Domestic Terrorism Taskforce as amended by the Senator Malcolm Augustine to include an appointment from the Prince George's County Municipal Association.

As elected in officials in the State of Maryland we take an oath of office calling upon us protect and defend both the Constitution of the State of Maryland as well the U.S. Constitution. Our constitution calls upon us to defend our country from threats both foreign and domestic.

Domestic terrorism is real in the United States. While our country has made tremendous strides toward reconciliation with history terror against minority communities, the attempted use of fear tactics and intimidation against minority communities, and even governmental entities is once again becoming a regular occurrence, especially given the Trump presidency as an accelerant. From the assault raffles at the Michigan State Capitol and attempted kidnaping of the Michigan governor, to the even more recent white supremacist driven attacks against people of Asian descent and asian communities. Domestic terror and white supremacy must be stopped. Not simply denounced, repudiated, or chastised, it must be stopped.

According to the Washington reporting the declassified National Counterterrorism Center, FBI, and DHS March 2021 Threat Report.

Domestic violent extremism poses an “elevated threat” to the United States this year, and lone offenders or small, self-organized cells — rather than organizations — are most likely to carry out attacks...racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists and self-styled militias present the most lethal threats.”

Our country has made bold steps toward reckoning with a past shrouded in racism, and terror for many minority communities. Now is not the time to allow a group of jihadist-styled bullies to use violent intimidation tactics to assert their cynical viewpoint upon the broader American public. Especially not here in the State of Maryland.

In Maryland, given our proximity to the Nation's Capitol, home to some many government resources and government workers, diversity of people, and our respect

for that diversity, we must ask ourselves, how can we protect our communities? How can Maryland ensure greater protection from domestic terror, through both prevention, but also coordinate response in the event an incident occurs either within the State or with a neighboring jurisdiction. In asking ourselves these questions, we must also answer honestly, knowing that State preparedness must mean prepared at all levels of government, including coordination amongst the Counties, and Municipalities.

I remind this committee that on January 6, 2021, pursuant to the Twelfth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, the President of the Senate, the Senate and the House of Representatives, were fulfilling their Constitutional duties. Unfortunately, in the weeks and days ahead of January 6, 2021, President Donald Trump urged his supporters to go to Washington, D.C. to stop the certification of the election results, contending that the results were invalid. Similar sentiments were expressed by other elected officials across the United States who urged their colleagues to object to the electoral vote certification, thereby overturning the will largely minority voters across of the Country. During a rally planned for January 6th 2021 attendees did in fact enter and vandalize both chambers and Congressional offices and committed acts of violence and theft during their siege on the Capitol.

I, like many Maryland residents, sat at home watching the brazen criminal acts committed on the television news cycles, completely aghast and horrified. Many residents living in the municipalities along the DC border, public expressed fear and concern understanding the insurrection, the act of domestic terrorism, framed as patriotism was occurring only a few miles away; right up the road for some.

The lives of residents from the City of Hyattsville, Maryland and the surrounding community, working in or near the Capitol, were imperiled by the rally attendees turned insurrectionists who sought to do harm to person and property. Local press reported to our residents on sudden incidents of concern in both Riverdale Park and Takoma Park, heightening the level of fear and anxiety within our communities.

To this committee I ask you to remember that, five individuals died as a result of the violent attempt of the insurrectionists to disrupt Congress from opening and counting the electoral votes certified by each state. I ask you take into account the level concern within our communities and the benefits revisiting or emergency preparedness in the event of another domestic terror incident. The municipalities are stand ready to partner with the State in this effort. Communities across our great State our counting on our ability to be prepared, especially given the added concern that officers were both injured protected our Capitol, and some perhaps complicit in the actions that took place.

Thank you,

Joseph A. Solomon
Hyattsville City Council Member

Ward 5