



**Maryland General Assembly
Senate Judicial Proceedings
March 8, 2022**

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
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ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of SB 790, Criminal Law – Executive or Legislative Proceedings – Obstruction**, which aims to prohibit a person from violently obstructing or impeding an official proceeding of the executive or legislative branch.

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the “Anti-Defamation League”) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, producing research to inform the public of the scope of these threats, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices that can effectively address and counter threats to communities.

ADL passionately defends free speech. We recognize that the First Amendment protects even hateful or offensive speech, and we believe that the best answer to hate speech is not censorship, but more speech. That being said, there is a fine line between protected speech and the violent disruption or obstruction of executive or legislative proceedings—the very conduct that we witnessed on January 6, 2021 at our nation’s Capitol.

Unfortunately, those who perpetrated the January 6th attack, and those who continue to pose a threat to our democracy, will not readily abandon their principles, nor will those who support acts of domestic terrorism from afar. We cannot expect there to be a change unless we change something about our approach. The trauma of January 6th must not be in vain.

ADL accordingly supports efforts like **SB 790** that seek to ensure accountability for those who use force or violence to undermine executive or legislative proceedings. This bill is consistent with our whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to combating domestic extremism and our **PROTECT** plan — a comprehensive, seven-part plan to mitigate the threat posed by domestic extremism and domestic terrorism in a way that protects civil rights and civil liberties — and an important step forward towards deterrence. We support and encourage all efforts to ensure that this bill will be implemented in a way that ensures safeguards for protected speech and protest.

**For all these reasons, we urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
to give SB 790 a favorable report.**