



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATEMENT

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Statement from Attorney General Brown on the Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention

BALTIMORE, MD (November 21, 2023) – The Office of Attorney General learned last week about personal social media posts of a member of the *Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention*, Zainab Chaudry, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations – Maryland Office (CAIR-MD).

The Commission was established by legislation passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor during the 2023 session. The Commission is charged with developing strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity, evaluating State laws and policies relating to hate crimes, and reporting annually to both the General Assembly and the Maryland State Department of Education.

The Commission is composed of more than 20 organizations, including CAIR, that are required under the new law to serve on the Commission. The Attorney General, as Chair of the Commission, is tasked with appointing the representatives from those mandated organizations.

The Attorney General is responsible for leading the diverse members of the Commission to help rid our State of unlawful and hateful activities. This critical mission requires Commission members to work collaboratively and with mutual respect. If any member of the Commission disrupts the work and mission of the Commission, then they will be subject to removal.

The Commission has only met once, with its inaugural meeting on September 6, 2023. Ms. Chaudry's posts on her personal social media since October 7, in these very early days of the Commission, have challenged the Commission's ability to do its work.

Attorney General Brown has determined that Ms. Chaudry's social media posts risk disrupting the work and mission of the Commission, so he is announcing steps that he took today to ensure that the vital work and mission of the Commission can continue without interruption.

Here are the steps the Attorney General took today:

1. He temporarily suspended Ms. Chaudry's membership on the Commission.

2. He assigned staff to develop a draft values statement about personal communications by Commission members to carefully balance their right to free speech with their role as a Commission member. The statement will be taken up for discussion at the Commission's next meeting.
3. He is calling on all members of the Commission to exercise great care in their communications and conduct, considering the duties and responsibilities they assumed when joining the Commission. For example, personal postings that could be reasonably perceived as hate speech may disrupt the ability of the Commission to accomplish its important work.

Attorney General Brown stated, "the Commission must serve as a model for the entire State on how to respond to incidents of hate and bias. The Commission is facing its first test. How we respond has deep implications. I take this very seriously, and I will do everything possible to bring people together to move forward the critical work of this Commission."

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/112123s.pdf>