



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

# PRESS RELEASE

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## UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ON THE *MARYLAND COMMISSION ON HATE CRIMES* *RESPONSE AND PREVENTION*

**BALTIMORE, MD (December 6, 2023)** – The Office of the Attorney General announced today the end of the temporary suspension of Zainab Chaudry from her position on the *Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention* (the Commission). Effective today, Dr. Chaudry has been reinstated.

Dr. Chaudry, Executive Director of the Maryland Office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), was temporarily suspended from the Commission on November 21, 2023, in the aftermath of posts to Dr. Chaudry’s personal social media pages that the Attorney General, as Chair of the Commission, had deemed disruptive to the work and mission of the Commission.

Upon further review, it was determined that the law establishing the Commission directs the Attorney General to appoint members to a 4-year fixed term but does not provide the Attorney General the authority to remove a Commissioner before the expiration of their term nor the authority to suspend a Commissioner during their term of service.

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. The Attorney General, as Chair of the Commission, is tasked with appointing its 22 members, including representatives from 19 organizations, including CAIR, that are specifically required by the law to be included on the Commission. However, the law that created the Commission is silent on the question of removal and suspension of members. The authority for removal or suspension by the Attorney General of a member of a statutorily created public body like the Commission who is appointed to a fixed term of years can only be granted by statute, enacted by the General Assembly and Governor. Prior to the Commission’s next meeting on December 13, the Attorney General will distribute draft operating guidelines to members which include personal communications and how to balance the members’ right to freedom of speech and their roles as Commissioners for their review and feedback.

The draft guidelines will emphasize that appointees to the Maryland Hate Crimes Commission are public officials charged with specific roles and responsibilities under State law. In accepting these positions, appointees assume an obligation to put their own interests aside when coming to the table to serve as advisors on matters of such great public importance.

“Once the guidelines are finalized, all Commission members will be expected to comply with them and I fully anticipate that they will,” **Attorney General Brown explained.** “I believe the Commissioners recognize the commitment required to eradicate hate crimes and bias incidents in Maryland, including the rising tide of antisemitism and Islamophobia. We must all put aside our differences, no matter how stark they may seem, and find common ground on ways to respond to and prevent hate crimes in our state.”

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/120623.pdf>