



January 27, 2026

**Testimony Before the Maryland State Board of Education  
In Support of Mandatory Palestine Cultural Literacy and Anti-Hate Instruction**

Dear President Michael, Vice President Goldson, and Members of the Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I want to begin with a reality that demands this Board's attention - not as a political issue, but as an educational and student-safety issue.

Earlier this month on January 16, students arrived to Walt Whitman High School in Montgomery County, to discover graffiti painted on the school wall that read "f\*\*\* Muslims" and "Nuke Palestine," accompanied by a Star of David. This occurred at a space students are required to enter every day expecting safety, dignity, and support.

For Palestinian and Muslim students, this was not rhetoric or debate. It was the latest message of hatred and violence directed at their identity. It told them they are targets. It told them they do not belong. And it raised a serious question for this Board: whether our schools are adequately equipped to prevent hate before it escalates.

Hate does not begin with graffiti. It begins with ignorance - when entire peoples are reduced to slogans, stereotypes, or erased altogether from our educational frameworks.

Palestine cultural literacy is not political advocacy. It is not endorsement of any government or movement. It is basic, age-appropriate education that teaches students to distinguish between civilians and governments, between identity and ideology, and between historical facts and online misinformation.

When students are not taught who Palestinians are - their history, culture, language, and lived experience - Palestinian students become symbols instead of human beings. And once a group is dehumanized, calls for violence against them become easier to normalize.

Maryland already recognizes the preventive power of education. We teach Holocaust education, genocide education, and civil rights history not to assign blame, but to prevent harm. We teach cultural literacy because it improves school climate, reduces bias, and protects vulnerable students before incidents occur.

Following that same educational logic, my office is calling on MSDE to mandate Palestine Cultural Literacy in Maryland public education.

It is structured and requires instruction to be factual, non-partisan, and age-appropriate. It safeguards academic freedom and First Amendment rights. It integrates into existing curricula rather than displacing

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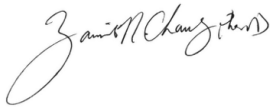
them. And it ensures that bias against Palestinians – including Christians and Muslims – is recognized and addressed within existing anti-discrimination frameworks same as other forms of hate.

The reality is that students are already encountering dangerously harmful narratives about Palestine – in social media, in group chats, and in our schools. The question is whether Maryland’s public education system will respond with silence – or with responsible, guided education.

The Maryland State Board of Education has the authority, the responsibility and the opportunity to lead on this issue. Addressing hate through education is not optional. It is foundational to your mission.

I urge the Board to support mandatory Palestine cultural literacy as a necessary step toward safer schools, stronger communities, and an education system that affirms the full humanity of every student.

Thank you for your time and leadership.



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