



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

November 14, 2023

As Jewish members of the Maryland General Assembly, we stand united in our belief that Hamas' actions on October 7, 2023 were horrific acts of terror and are to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. There is no justification for what happened that day. We care deeply about the loss of innocent life in both Israel and Gaza, and believe we must work towards bringing peace to the region, including the return of more than 200 Israeli hostages: innocent children, women and men.

We were deeply disappointed and hurt by the recent social media posts of CASA de Maryland and its Executive Director, Gustavo Torres, and found them to be inaccurate and ill-conceived. They displayed a profound misunderstanding of Middle East history, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jewish history, and antisemitism. While we are thankful that the posts were removed, and an acknowledgement that CASA's words were hurtful, we believe more intentional actions are needed including a public apology, continued outreach to the community, and a commitment, within the organization, to dive more deeply into these issues.

It is also unfortunate that CASA's statement did not recognize that Jewish people are indigenous to the state of Israel, among many other groups, and instead fell back on the trope of "colonialism" that has too often been bandied about to attack the legitimacy of the state of Israel. We can have disagreements about particular aspects of Israeli policy or politics, but what is non-negotiable is that Israel has the right to exist as a democratic Jewish state.

CASA's primary mission is to provide services to immigrant communities in this country and to help address their struggles in obtaining housing, healthcare, financial services, and more. Many of us have worked closely with CASA in their advocacy for services and we wholeheartedly support its mission of making Maryland a welcoming state for immigrants. Many of us are immigrants or are from families only one or two generations removed from having arrived in this country, frequently seeking refuge in America from violent antisemitism abroad. The struggles of being a new immigrant to this country are quite real and personal to us. That is why we have each worked so closely with CASA over the years.

We stand squarely against antisemitism and Islamophobia and believe in the rights of all people to live safely and peacefully, both here and in the Middle East. These are challenging times, and we stand ready and waiting to work for these values with all individuals and organizations willing to join us in these efforts.

Sincerely,

Delegate Dalya Attar
Delegate Jon Cardin
Delegate Mark Edelson
Senator Brian Feldman
Senator Shelly Hettleman
Senator Cheryl Kagan
Delegate Anne Kaiser
Delegate Aaron Kaufman
Senator Ariana Kelly
Delegate Marc Korman

Senator Ben Kramer
Senator Karen Lewis-Young
Delegate Sandy Rosenberg
Delegate Jared Solomon
Delegate Ryan Spiegel
Delegate Dana Stein
Delegate Joe Vogel
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher
Senator Craig Zucker

