

Written Testimony - Chippella DAIMA Lewis (Wilde Lake Community DISTRICT 4)

*I support the passing of **Council Bill 20-2026** for the establishment of an Interfaith Advisory Commission, and I hope our City Council does too; because if we ever did need one, we sure do need one now.*

The Establishment Clause—Separation of Church and State—prohibits the government from favoring a specific religion, but it does not mandate the total absence of religious voices in the public square.

In recognition of Women's History Month, I would be remiss not to mention the names of women leaders who have positively influenced our world through civic engagement, directly impacting and spearheading legislative changes that have enhanced our government and society:

- Dorothy Day: Dedicated her life to radical hospitality, pacifism, and providing direct aid to the poor.
- Sojourner Truth: Argued for the inherent dignity of all people.
- Harriet Tubman: Led hundreds of enslaved people to freedom via the Underground Railroad.
- Elizabeth Ann Seton: Founded the Sisters of Charity.
- Fanny Crosby: A blind hymn writer who penned over 8,000 gospel songs.
- Aimee Semple McPherson: Revolutionized the use of modern media and radio for religious outreach.
- Lucretia Mott: A central leader in both the abolitionist and women's rights movements.
- Coretta Scott King: Integrated nonviolent ethics into the Civil Rights Movement and founded the King Center, having dedicated her life to institutionalizing the philosophy of nonviolence and expanding the scope of the movement to include women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and economic justice.
- Elisabeth Elliot: An influential author who gained international recognition for her message of forgiveness and perseverance.
- Rosa Parks: Civil rights activist whose refusal to surrender and nonviolent defiance transformed passive frustration into organized collective action that helped begin efforts to dismantle systemic injustice.

- Jackie Jackson Civil Rights & Global Advocate- "First Lady" of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition has led international delegations to address humanitarian crises and fair foreign policy regarding Cuba, Haiti, and South Africa.
- Angela Davis: A prominent American academic, author, and activist known for her leadership in the civil rights and prison abolition movements; a member of the Black Panther Party dedicated to advocating for racial, gender, and economic justice.

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- Shehlla Khan: Co-Chair of PATH (People Acting Together in Howard) and an advocate for affordable housing and racial equity.
- Paige Getty: A leading voice in the "Courageous Conversations" racial justice initiative.
- Lori James: Member of the PATH Board of Directors, focusing on grassroots community organizing.
- Rachel Safman: Advocate for active community building.
- Susan Stuart: A Coordinator for Women's Philanthropy that addresses local social justice and food insecurity.
- Zainab Chaudry: A Howard County resident and Maryland Director for CAIR, who advocates for civic inclusion and civil rights in the region.
- Mary Ka Kanahan: Known for hosting community service and social activism since Columbia's founding.
- Buffy Schwartz: Founder of the Women's Giving Circle of Howard County, helping women leverage their resources for local philanthropic impact.
- Dr. Homayara Aziz: Renowned OBGYN & Member of the Howard County Commission for Women and an advocate for healthcare equity.
- Stephanie Al-Adhami: An active member of the Commission for Women working to remove barriers to civic participation for immigrant communities.

What do ALL these women have in common? I'm glad you asked. They are women of faiths—women who draw strength from a force greater than themselves. They are servant leaders who utilize that power to gain insight and wisdom; to create, promote, mobilize, stabilize, empower, educate, support, and uplift our communities locally, statewide, and globally.

Lewis, C. DAIMA 3/17/2026

Historically, faith-based institutions have served as pillars, voices of reason, beacons of charity, and safe havens that offer resolve, restitution, and remedy for many calamities that life, failed policies, and disruptions of community experience in society.

I believe an Interfaith Advisory Commission will promote inclusion and community harmony, adding to vast and needed dialogue rather than being a proponent of dogma. In my opinion, providing a "seat at the table" for stakeholders of faith to discuss civic issues is a form of community engagement that is a chief cornerstone of our foundation, a vital component to the preservation of our history, and the very thread that culminates the "fabric of our society."

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