



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

Judiciary Committee

HB 5 – Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate

1/16/2020

Support

Good afternoon Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Al Collins, and I serve as a member of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland's Legislative Committee as well as Legislative Director for the Maryland Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians. Today we asking you to support HB 5 – Hate Crimes – Use of an Item or Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate.

Hate is neither a religious nor American value. The sacred scriptures of many different faith traditions speak with unity on the subject of hate. Crimes motivated by hatred or bigotry are an assault not only upon individual victims' freedoms, but also upon a belief that lies at the core of our diverse faith traditions, i.e., that every human being is created in the image of God. While we recognize that legislation alone cannot remove hatred from the hearts and minds of individuals, this proposed legislation will serve as a crucial step in building a society where hate-motivated crimes are deemed intolerable.

In 2018, the FBI documented 7,120 hate crimes directed against institutions and individuals because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. But these troubling statistics go well beyond the victim because behind each and every one of these incidents are individuals, families, and communities deeply impacted by these crimes.

Now is the time for this committee to publicly reaffirm its commitment to protect all Americans from such flagrant bias-motivated violence. The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland as well as the Maryland Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians are committed to eradicating the blatant hatred and violence which divides our society. HB 5 is vital to this struggle, and we ask you to support its passage



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Support

HB 231 - Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act
House Environmental and Transportation Committee
2/4/2020

Presented by Rev. Kathy Shahinian

Good afternoon Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and Members of the House Environmental and Transportation Committee. My name is Rev. Kathy Shahinian, Public Policy Liaison for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland and I am here today to support HB 231 – Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act.

HB 231 prohibits landlords from discrimination against potential tenants based on the source of the tenant's income. The Episcopal Diocese of Md strongly supports HB 231 as a means of insuring fairness, greater economic opportunity, and increased housing for seniors, working families, persons with disabilities and veterans.

The Church holds that one of the government's primary responsibilities is to ensure that the most basic needs of its people are met. In the United States, our Federal government does this, in part, through the Housing Choice Voucher Program (known as Section 8). Maryland serves the housing needs of its lowest-income residents through the State's Rental Allowance Program (RAP). Others receive housing assistance through programs designed for veterans or those with disabilities. But while a family or individual may be successful in receiving assistance through Section 8 or RAP, in many parts of Maryland, they encounter another challenge in their search for housing. With the exception of Frederick, Howard, Montgomery Counties and the City of Annapolis, citizens often are discriminated against in their search for housing.

It is common to see newspaper or internet ads that contain the words, "No Section 8". It is more common for working poor Marylanders to hear this refrain when they inquire into available housing. Such discrimination is also faced by people who base their income, in part or in total, on disability or cash assistance, child support or alimony. For those that encounter this discrimination it can be frustrating and demoralizing.

Individuals and families having the lawful means to rent or buy housing should not be denied housing based on the source of financial means. Those with the income or credit worthiness and other necessary credentials to rent or buy should not be denied the ability to find housing. In 2012 The Episcopal Church adopted resolutions:

That all dioceses develop a plan to raise the quality and dignity of life for the poor and homeless.¹

The US Government work to end discriminatory practices that leave women, children and seniors vulnerable to housing discrimination²

Recognizing housing as a fundamental human right, The Episcopal Diocese of Md respectfully request a favorable report for HB 231.

¹ The Episcopal Church Resolution 2012 – C038 http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-C038

² The Episcopal Church Resolution 2012-A138 http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2012-A138



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