



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 11, 2020

SB 989

**Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Penalty (Educate Against Hate Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 989. The Catholic Conference represents the public-policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 989 would add to the sentencing requirements for hate crimes, mandating at least eight hours of educational instruction relating to the group or community against whom the hate crime was committed.

In response to recent hate crime activity in our society, the Church, both in Maryland and nationally, has created committees to address racism and hate, spur dialogue, and develop action plans to address the issue. A fall 2019 report by the Maryland State Police cited 398 hate/bias incidents reported to law enforcement agencies in the State in the 2017 calendar year. In 2018, 375 hate/bias incidents were reported to law enforcement agencies in the State. The Church denounces such activity and supports commonsense measures to curb hate-motivated activity and foster understanding among its citizens.

Pope Francis has stated that the “problem of intolerance must be confronted in all its forms: wherever any minority is persecuted and marginalized because of its religious convictions or ethnic identity, the wellbeing of society as a whole is endangered and each one of us must feel affected.” (*Pope Francis, Address to a Delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2013*)

Senate Bill 989 seeks not to further punish hate crime offenders, but rather to build understanding of the communities or persons against whom they are committed. In doing so, this legislation offers a simple, but meaningful, way of combatting hate crime recidivism through human understanding.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 989.