



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senator Charles E. Sydnor III**  
**Testimony Regarding SB 580 – Public Safety – Empowering Communities to Counter**  
**Racially Motivated Violent Extremism Program Fund – Establishment**  
**Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**On February 20, 2020**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Hate crimes in Maryland had been decreasing from a high of 51 in 2013, 16 in 2014, 43 in 2015, 37 in 2016, and rising again starting 2017 to 48, and to 50 in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of all Maryland residents are of a minority race.<sup>2</sup> It is important for our state to take action against race-based violence. The Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) has stated that it wants to be able to rely on local governments to be able to respond to this type of violence.<sup>3</sup> This is where SB 580 comes in.

The goal of SB 580 is to provide funding for any activities related to conducting crime reduction programs that address, reduce, and prevent hate crimes in our communities. This bill makes it easier to track this violence and train law enforcement to be able to recognize and stop hate crimes. DHS recognizes that these kinds of attacks are a form of domestic terrorism that must be addressed. It is time for Maryland to respond by preparing law enforcement to address this threat to our community.

Late last year, DHS acknowledged a rise in race-based violence across the world.<sup>4</sup> Hate crime actors worldwide have demonstrated their willingness to commit violence to achieve their goals. Some of the most noteworthy examples of race-based violence include the 2017 rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, and the 2019 mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand.

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<sup>1</sup> FBI Hate Crime Statistics Table 13, Maryland, 2014-2018. Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/publications#Hate-Crime%20Statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau Maryland Quick Facts, retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence, retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19\\_0920\\_plcy\\_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0920_plcy_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf), page 35.

<sup>4</sup> Kanno-Youngs, Zolan, *Homeland Security Dept. Affirms Threat of White Supremacy After Years of Prodding*, retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/01/us/politics/white-supremacy-homeland-security.html>.

According to the Department of Homeland Security in a 2019 report, domestic terrorism “motivated by racially- and ethnically-motivated violent extremism, anti-government and anti-authority violent extremism, and other violent extremist ideologies, represent a growing share of the threat to the Homeland.”<sup>5</sup> This threat is borne out of fundamental changes to American society that law enforcement has not faced before.<sup>6</sup> “More diverse sets of actors” are responsible for these extremist attacks than ever before, making spotting these actors increasingly difficult. Additionally, technology is changing the way we interact with each other.

These rapid changes in technology have benefited society in many ways, but there have been negative side effects. The rapid spread of mass information and communication fuels the spread of hateful ideologies and emboldens potential attackers.<sup>7</sup> If we are going to combat these hateful threats, we must train our law enforcement to understand and adapt to the threat and understand this new and potentially malicious technology as well as its effect on society.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing the signs of a potential threat is the first step to preventing it.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB 580.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Homeland Security Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence, retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19\\_0920\\_plcy\\_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0920_plcy_strategic-framework-countering-terrorism-targeted-violence.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 12.