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Legislative District 24
Prince George's County

Finance Committee
Chair, Rules Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families
Ending Homelessness
Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Prince George's County
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

SB 606- Criminal Law- Hate Crimes- Basis (2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law)

Good afternoon Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. It with a saddened heart that I stand before you today on behalf of SB 606- Criminal Law- Hate Crimes- Basis (2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law. We are grieving for the lost of such a promising young man who was taken from us all too soon. In 2017, Lt. Richard Collins III was tragically killed. A newly commissioned second lieutenant in the U.S. Army and a graduating senior from Bowie State University, his life was ended at the hands of Mr. Sean Urbanski.

Our wonderful State's Attorney, Ms. Aisha Braveboy and her team were incredible in prosecuting Mr. Urbanski. He was convicted of first degree murder and faces a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. However, the hate crime charge against Mr. Urbanski was unfortunately thrown out since Maryland's current statute requires one to definitely prove that one committed the act against another due to one's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin as the sole motivation of the crime.

In this day and age, hate rhetoric surrounds us. It infiltrates our homes when we watch the news and it permeates our social lives as it passes through on our social media. According to the State of Maryland 2018 Hate Bias Report, 375 hate bias incidents were reported by Maryland law enforcement agencies in 2018 and in 2019 7,175 bias motivated crimes were reported to the FBI nationwide.

As we march forward in history ushering in the dream that Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned, we have forgotten that the fight to end hatred within our nation, is a fight that we can never abandon. This bill seeks to rectify this. SB 606 seeks to hold people accountable when they are motivated either in whole or in part by another person's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin in the commission of a crime.

We are seeking to move forward on the right side of history. Away from the hatred that fueled the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed those four young girls, away from the poison of hatred that filled so many hearts during the Holocaust, away from the bigotry that charged the gunman during the Orlando massacre at the Pulse Nightclub that killed so many, and away

from the hatred that took away Lt. Richard Collins III's life all too soon. It is time that we take a stand and call these acts what they are- hate crimes.

We need to send a message that will resound across the world that hate has **no place** in Maryland and these hate crimes will not be tolerated under any circumstance. Thus, I urge the committee to be **bold** and fight on the right side of history and urge a favorable report for SB 606.