

SB0956_JPR_Queen Annes Co_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Amy Moredock

Position: FAV



*Queen
Anne's
County*

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

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James J. Moran, At Large

Jack N. Wilson, Jr., District 1

Stephen Wilson, District 2

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Christopher M. Corchiarino, District 4

WRITTEN TESTIMONY – SUPPORT

DATE: 16 MARCH 2022
TO: JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
FROM: AMY G. MOREDOCK, PLANNING DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: **SENATE BILL 956**
CRIMINAL LAW - THREATS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

I am writing on behalf of the Queen Anne's County Department of Planning and Zoning in **SUPPORT OF SB956** and its intention to extend criminal penalties for threats leveled against county health officers, election administrators, and building and housing inspectors as they attempt to carry out their duties. Local jurisdictions are charged with the duties to implement and enforce land use and comprehensive planning within their communities. While this is oftentimes a rewarding charge, it is also a challenging one.

Every planning and zoning department puts great emphasis on professional and consistent service to its residents. A vast majority of the projects and building permits are processed proficiently with no undue inconvenience or challenge. However, there are project and building permit applications that are also more demanding depending upon the nature of the project itself, the neighborhood in which it is occurring, and the citizens involved. In these more challenging instances, the enforcement authority in a standard zoning code and the right of entry articulated therein is often directly and aggressively challenged.

In extreme cases involving zoning enforcement, there are often many factors that lead to a zoning code violation. A property does not become the subject of an enforcement action overnight, and there has generally been a great deal of impact on a neighborhood leading up an official site visit by a zoning inspector. Such zoning violations are typically the result of much more complicated causes involving mental and environmental health concerns. In such cases, zoning inspectors are called upon to enter toxic and sometimes unsafe situations. These cases may involve threats from dangerous animals and even intimidation with firearms. Incidents of this nature have been documented in Queen Anne's County.

For these reasons and many more which are less pronounced but cumulatively as significant, I support and appreciate the foresight of the inclusion of building and housing inspectors within the list of public servants protected under SB956 as proposed. Building and housing inspectors are dedicated public servants who work under stressful conditions in order make their communities better and safer places for all residents.

SB0956_PGCEX_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Angela Alsobrooks

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: SB0956 – Criminal Law - Threats to Public Officials

SPONSOR: Senator Watson

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS SB0956 – Criminal Law - Threats to Public Officials**, which adds health officers, election administrators, and public employees responsible for inspecting and enforcing housing and building codes and standards to the list of public officials against whom it is illegal to knowingly and willfully make a threat to take the life of, kidnap, or injure.

Maryland Health Officers are regularly harassed by the public, including receiving threats to their lives, homes, and families. Threats of violence caused the Health Officer in Montgomery County to step down in 2021. **SB 956** would codify the criminality of this behavior to ensure our public health officials and others are not actively threatened while trying to do their jobs.

SB 956 would allow prosecutors to hold people legally accountable for threats in any written form to intimidate and threaten public health officials, health officers, election administrators, and public employees who are responsible for inspecting and enforcing housing and building codes and standards. Elected officials already have such legal protection. A person who violates this law will be guilty of a misdemeanor and if convicted would be subject to imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or a fine not exceeding \$2,500 or both.

No one working to protect and serve the public good should fear for their lives. For these reasons, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 956** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

50 state survey- Threats and Harassment. Public He

Uploaded by: Brooke Torton

Position: FAV



NEW EMERGING ISSUES

50-State Survey: Threats and Interfering with Government Operations

Legal Protections for Public Health Officials: Threats and Interfering with Government Operations

Background

Nationwide, state and local public health officials working to protect the public from COVID-19 are on the receiving end of threatening and harassing conduct for simply fulfilling their duty to protect the public health. In response, the Network conducted research to examine whether the states and Washington, D.C. have criminal statutes punishing individuals who impede public health officials' duties with such behavior. Our research is presented in this chart. Many states have adopted statutes to protect public officials generally; included here are those with broad enough language to include public health officials. States with laws that cover other public officials, but not public health officials, were not included in this chart. While 35 states and Washington, D.C., have such a statute, the remaining 15 states either do not have a statute protecting government officials in these circumstances or do not have one protecting public health officials. Of the 35 states and Washington, D.C., all but 2, Louisiana and Oklahoma, include protections for state **and** local officials.

State	Statute	Who is covered?	What is prohibited?	Penalties
Alabama	Ala.Code 1975 § 13A-10-2	All state and local public servants	Using intimidation, physical force, interference, or other unlawful acts to obstruct, impair or hinder or prevent a public servant from performing a governmental function	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$6,000 fine

Alaska	X	X	X	X
Arizona	A.R.S. § 13-2402	All state and local public servants	Using or threatening to use violence or physical force to obstruct, impair, or hinder the performance of a governmental function	Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$2,500 fine
Arkansas	A.C.A. § 5-54-102	All state and local public servants	Obstructing, impairing, or hindering the performance of any governmental function	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$2,500 fine
California	West's Ann.Cal.Penal Code § 76	All state and local elected public officials	Threatening death or serious bodily harm to an elected public official	Up to \$5,000 in fines and/or up to 1 year imprisonment. Increasing penalties for subsequent convictions.
Colorado	C.R.S.A. § 18-8-102	All state and local public servants	Obstructing, impairing, or hindering a public servant's performance of a governmental function by using or threatening to use violence, force, physical interference, or obstacle	Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or \$50-\$750 fine
Connecticut	X	X	X	X

District of Columbia	DC ST § 22-851	All public officials or employees	(1) Threatening, forcing, sending a threatening communication, which attempts to or does intimidate, impede, interfere with, or retaliate against any official or employee while performing duties (2) Stalking, threatening, assaulting, injuring any official or employee or vandalizing, damaging, destroying, or taking the property of an official or employee, while the official or employee performs their duties	(1) Punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years and/or up to a \$12,500 fine (2) Punishable by imprisonment for up to 3 years and/or up to \$12,500 fine
Delaware	11 Del.C. § 1240	All state and local public officials or servants	Threatens to commit any crime likely to result in death or in serious injury to a public official or public servant due to their official work duties	Up to 2 years imprisonment and fines left to judicial discretion
Florida	X	X	X	X
Georgia	X	X	X	X
Hawaii	HRS § 710-1010	All state and local public servants	Using or threatening to use violence, force, physical interference or obstacle, a person obstructs, impairs, or hinders a public servant's	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$2000 fine

			performance of a governmental function	
Idaho	I.D. § 18-1353	All state and local public servants	Unlawfully threatens harm to any public servant to influence their decision, opinion, recommendation, vote, or other exercise of discretion; or threatens harm to any public servant	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine. Misdemeanor unless the threat was made with the purpose of influencing a decision, then it becomes a felony, punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and/or up to \$50,000 fine.
Illinois	X	X	X	X
Indiana	IC ST 35-45-2-1	All persons are protected , but there are escalating penalties if the crime was committed against government officials or because of one's occupation/employment	Communicates a threat with the intent to cause another person to be placed in fear of retaliation for a lawful act; or causes a building, vehicle, or other structure to be evacuated or to interfere with the occupancy of a building	Depending on the facts: Class A misdemeanor, Level 5 Felony, or Level 6 Felony Class A Misdemeanor maximum 1 year imprisonment and/or maximum of \$5,000 in fines Level 5 Felony maximum 6 years imprisonment and/or maximum \$10,000 fine

				Level 6 Felony – between 6 months to 2 and a half years imprisonment and maximum \$10,000 fine
Iowa	I.C.A. § 718.4	All state and local public employees	Prevents or attempts to prevent any public officer or employee from performing their duties	Up to 30 days incarceration and/or \$65-\$625 fine
Kansas	K.S.A. 21-5922	All state and local public officials or employees	Impedes any public employee in the lawful performance of their job or knowingly impedes and disrupts by any act of intrusion into a chamber used for any executive body	Depending on the facts the offense is either a Class A non-person misdemeanor or level 6 person felony. A Class A non-person misdemeanor is punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$2,500 fine. A Level 6 person felony is punishable by imprisonment determined by the Kansas Felony Sentencing Grid and/or up to \$100,000 fine.
Kentucky	KRS § 519.020	All state and local public servants	Intentionally obstructs, impairs or hinders the performance of a governmental function by using or threatening to use violence, force or physical interference	Up to 12 months imprisonment and/or up to \$500 fine

Louisiana	LSA-R.S. 14:122.2	Only state public officials	Threatening a public official by engaging in any verbal or written communication that communicates a true threat	Up to 6 months imprisonment, and/or maximum \$500 fine
Maine	17-A M.R.S.A. § 751	All state and local public servants	Interferes by force, violence, intimidation or by any physical act with a public servant performing or purporting to perform an official function	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$2000 fine
Maryland	X	X	X	X
Massachusetts	X	X	X	X
Michigan	MI ST 333.1291	All health officers and others enforcing health law	Oppose or obstruct a department representative, health officer, or other person charged with enforcement of a health law in performance of that person's duty to enforce that law	Up to 90 days imprisonment and/or up to \$500 fine
Minnesota	M.S.A. §609.713	All persons	Threatens to commit a crime of violence, to terrorize another, to cause evacuation of a building or place, or otherwise cause serious public inconvenience	Up to 5 years imprisonment and/or up to \$10,000 fine

Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-17; Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-63	All persons holding state or local office	<p>Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-17</p> <p>Conspire to prevent by force, intimidation, or threat, any person from discharging their duties as an officer or to interrupt, hinder, or impede their official duties</p> <p>Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-63</p> <p>Obstruct or unreasonably interfere with free entrance to and from any public premises (state, county, or municipal owned)</p>	<p>Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-17</p> <p>Up to 5 years imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine</p> <p>Miss. Code Ann. § 97-7-63</p> <p>Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$500 fine</p>
Missouri	V.A.M.S. 576.030	All state and local officials	<p>Obstructs, impairs, hinders, or perverts the performance of a governmental function by the use or threat of violence, force, or other physical interference or obstacle</p>	<p>Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine</p>
Montana	MCA 45-7-302	All state and local public servants	<p>Obstructs, impairs, or hinders the enforcement of the criminal law, the preservation of the peace, or the performance of a governmental function</p>	<p>Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or fine up to \$500</p>
Nebraska	Neb.Rev.St. § 28-901	All state and local public servants	<p>Obstructs, impairs, or perverts the administration of law or other governmental functions by force, violence, physical interference or obstacle, breach of official duty, or any other unlawful act</p>	<p>Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$1000 fine</p>

Nevada	N.R.S. 197.090	All state and local public officers	Deters or prevents a public officer by threat, force, or violence from performing any duty imposed by law	Up to 364 days of imprisonment and/or up to \$2,000 fine
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. § 642:1	All state and local public servants	Using intimidation, actual or threatened force or violence, or engaging in any other unlawful conduct to hinder or interfere with a public servant	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$2,000 fine
New Jersey	N.J.S.A. 2C:29-1 N.J.S.A. 2C:27-3	All state and local public servants	<p>N.J.S.A. 2C:29-1</p> <p>Obstructs, impairs, or perverts the administration of law or other governmental function or prevents or attempts to prevent a public servant from lawfully performing an official function by flight, intimidation, force, violence, or physical interference or obstacle, or unlawful act</p> <p>N.J.S.A. 2C:27-3</p> <p>Threatens unlawful harm to any person to influence a decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or exercise of discretion of a public servant or threatens harm to any public servant with purpose to influence a decision, opinion, recommendation, vote</p>	<p>N.J.S.A. 2C:29-1</p> <p>Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$1000 fine</p> <p>N.J.S.A. 2C:27-3</p> <p>Up to 3-5 years imprisonment and/or up to \$15,000 fine</p>

New Mexico	N. M. S. A. 1978, § 30-20-13	All state and local public officials	Shall not deny to public officials freedom of movement within a building, lawful use of the building, right to enter and exit the building; shall not impede a public official through the use of restraint, abduction, coercion or intimidation, or when force and violence are present or threatened; shall not refuse to leave public property when requested to do so by lawful custodian	Up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$500 fine
New York	McKinney's Public Health Law § 12-c McKinney's Penal Law § 195.05	McKinney's Public Health Law § 12-c All health officers and others enforcing health laws McKinney's Penal Law § 195.05 All state and local public servants	McKinney's Public Health Law § 12-c Opposes or obstructs a health officer or physician charged with enforcement of the health laws in performing any legal duty McKinney's Penal Law § 195.05 Obstructs, impairs, or perverts the administration of law or other governmental function or prevents or attempts to prevent a public servant from performing an official function, by means of intimidation, physical force, interference, or by means of any independently unlawful act	McKinney's Public Health Law § 12-c Through April 1, 2023 up to 1 year imprisonment and/or a fine up to \$2,000 for a first offense (up to \$10,000 if serious harm results to patients and \$5,000 for a subsequent offense within 12 months of the first if the same violation is committed) McKinney's Penal Law § 195.05 Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine

North Carolina	X	X	X	X
North Dakota	NDCC, 12.1-08-01	All state and local public servants	Obstructs, impairs, impedes, hinders, prevents, or perverts the administration of law or other governmental function	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$3,000 fine
Ohio	R.C. § 2921.03	All state and local public servants	Forces or threatens harm to any person or property, or by filing, recording, or otherwise using a materially false or fraudulent writing with malicious purpose to influence, intimidate, or hinder a public servant in the discharge of public duties	9 to 36 months imprisonment and/or up to \$10,000 fine
Oklahoma	21 Okl.St. Ann. § 280	Only state employees	Disturb, interfere, or disrupt state business, agency operations or any employee, agent, official, or representative of the state	Up to 1 year imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine
Oregon	O.R.S. § 162.235	All state and local government operations	Obstructs, impairs, or hinders the administration of law or other governmental or judicial function by means of intimidation, force, physical, or economic interference	Up to 364 days imprisonment and/or up to \$6,250 fine
Pennsylvania	18 Pa.C.S.A. § 5101	All state and local government functions	Obstructs, impairs, or perverts the administration of law or other governmental function by force, violence, physical interference or obstacle, breach	Up to 2 years imprisonment and/or up to \$5,000 fine

			of official duty, or any other unlawful act	
Rhode Island	X	X	X	X
South Carolina	X	X	X	X
South Dakota	SDCL § 22-11-3	All state and local public officers and employees	Obstructs or attempts to obstruct a public officer or employee in the performance of any official duty	Up to 30 days imprisonment and/or up to \$500 fine
Tennessee	X	X	X	X
Texas	V.T.C.A., Penal Code § 38.15	All state and local persons with responsibility for assessing, enacting, or enforcing public health measures	Interrupts, disrupts, impedes, or interferes with a person who has responsibility for assessing, enacting, or enforcing public health measures	Up to 180 days imprisonment and/or up to \$2,000 fine
Utah	U.C.A. 1953 § 76-8-301	All state and local public servants	Uses force, violence, intimidation, or engages in any other unlawful act to interfere with a public servant performing or purporting to perform an official function	Depending on the facts either: Class B misdemeanor: up to 6 months imprisonment and/or up to \$1,000 fine

				OR Class C misdemeanor: up to 90 days imprisonment and/or up to \$750 fine
Vermont	X	X	X	X
Virginia	X	X	X	X
Washington	West's RCWA 9A.76.180	All state and local public servants	Uses a threat to influence or attempt to influence a public servant's vote, opinion, decision, or other official action	Up to 10 years imprisonment and/or up to \$20,000 fine
West Virginia	W. Va. Code, § 16-2-15	All local public health officers	Obstructs any local health officer or person charged with the enforcement of any public health law, in the performance of that person's legal duties in enforcing the law	Fine of \$200-\$1,000
Wisconsin	X	X	X	X



Wyoming	X	X	X	X
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SUPPORTERS



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Support for the Network provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

This document was developed by Brooke Torton, Senior Staff Attorney for the Network for Public Health Law – Eastern Region Office. The Network for Public Health Law provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The legal information and assistance provided in this document does not constitute legal advice or legal representation. For legal advice, please consult specific legal counsel.

December 2021

SB956. Favorable. Brooke Torton.pdf

Uploaded by: Brooke Torton

Position: FAV

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Brooke Torton, attorney with the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, 500 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Re: Testimony in Support of SB956

My name is Brooke Torton and I am an attorney employed at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, practicing public health law.

SB956 establishes criminal penalties for those who threaten health officers, election administrators, and other public employees. Although Maryland has existing law which criminalizes threats made specifically against local elected officials and some state officials, it does not extend these protections to the abovementioned positions.

In my professional capacity, I have the honor and privilege of working closely with state and local public health officials all across Maryland and nationwide. Since the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020, these officials have worked tirelessly to respond to the public health emergency while facing countless credible and personal threats. This has disrupted their official duties and, in many cases, upended their personal lives. In response to the need for public health official support and legal resources due to these threats and harassment, I completed a 50-state survey to identify which states criminalize threats made against these officials. Thirty-five states and Washington D.C. have codified laws which protect public health officials in these circumstances. Unfortunately, Maryland is in the minority and is not one of these states.

Passing SB956 sends a clear message to perpetrators that public health officials are worthy of the same protections as other government officials. I urge a favorable report for SB956 and encourage you to join the other 35 states and Washington, D.C. who have already taken action to offer these protections for public health officials. I have included the 50-state survey with my testimony.

SB0956-JPR_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: D'Paul Nibber

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 956

Criminal Law - Threats to Public Officials

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: March 16, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 956. This bill extends criminal penalties for threats leveled against county health officers, election administrators, and building and housing inspectors as they attempt to carry out their duties. For the 2022 legislative session, MACo has prioritized the well-being of public-facing civil servants as one of its four initiatives. Especially during a pandemic, no frontline civil servant should be subject to a work environment made even more difficult due to threats and harassment.

In late 2021, The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) pressed the federal government to intervene and protect local public health officials from threats of violence. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these officials have been subject to heightened pressures and scrutiny for actions taken to save lives. The resulting impact has been devastating.

NACCHO reports more than 300 public health department leaders have left their posts throughout the pandemic. In Maryland, two prominent health officers resigned during this same period. The Maryland Association of County Health Officers, an affiliate organization of MACo's, reports threats and harassment to its members have increased in volume and intensity in response to decisions made to protect the public from the COVID-19 virus.

Similarly, election officials have found themselves under assault. According to a recent Brennan Center for Justice poll, one in six local election officials have experienced threats because of their job, and 30% of polled election workers know a fellow worker who left their position because of fear for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation.

Even prior to the pandemic, housing and building code enforcement officials experienced significant levels of harassment on the job. The American Association of Code Enforcement estimates at least ten code enforcement officials lost their lives within the last 20 years issuing warnings or citations, and significantly more survived assaults and received regular threats. In Maryland, county officials have noted difficulty retaining code enforcement officials due to increased workplace hostility.

In response, the State should both protect and reaffirm the importance of our civil servants, who, in turn, protect both our well-being and democratic principles. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 956 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0956.pdf

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JOEL N. BELLER
Acting Director of Government Affairs

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

MIA R. GOGEL
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 956

TITLE: Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials

SPONSOR: Senator Watson

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 16, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 956 – Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials. This legislation would provide health officers, election administrators, and public employees who are responsible for inspecting and enforcing housing and building codes and standards with further protection from threats made against them.

Threats against public officials have recently risen sharply both in number and in severity, putting their ability to perform their duties safely at risk. Threats made by the public discourage individuals from taking public positions, disrupt government operations, and pose a risk to the health and safety of Maryland’s public employees. Residents throughout the State rely on public officials to coordinate health responses in times of emergency, ensure compliance with state and local code, and carry out the day-to-day government operations that keep services running efficiently. Enhanced legal protections for public officials ensure that the critical services they provide continue uninterrupted and those who disturb their wellbeing are met with appropriate consequences.

Senate Bill 956 adds health officers, election administrators, and certain public employees to the list of already protected public officials. This bill imposes severe penalties on violations, providing up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$2,500 on individuals who threaten specified public officials. Senate Bill 956 will keep essential public professionals safe in a time when their services could not be more vital.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 956. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB0956_JPR_MAEO_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Berry

Position: FAV



Carroll County Board of Elections

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March 15, 2022

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB956 – Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher & Members of the Committee:

My name is Katherine Berry and I am writing in support of SB956 – Criminal Penalties – Threats to Public Officials. I have worked at the Carroll County Board of Elections since 2006 and have served as the Election Director since 2015. I have experienced elections on every level beginning as a college intern and then progressively increasing responsibilities as a permanent employee to where I am today as the Director.

Immediately following the 2016 election cycle, elections officially became part of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) "Critical Infrastructures" of the United States. That election seemingly made society, the media, and elected officials think about elections in a different way. There were more phone calls from voters asking questions about the voting processes, more skepticism of the entire electoral process and a greater need to be given the tools to reassure voters of the election results and to secure our voting systems and processes. The local boards of elections quickly learned that being a "critical infrastructure" was much more involved than just the simple terminology. There were trainings, security awareness, advancements in physical security and cybersecurity. The entire electoral process became a more sophisticated agency overnight. Along with the added sophistication of the agency, social media platforms became increasingly important to become more engaged with our voters and communities and it was not uncommon for a story about elections to be on the news every day.

Fast forward to a 2020-pandemic world where election officials were scrutinized for every standard administrative process. We seemed to have worked longer hours than most other agencies in state government and were expected to make sure every voter had a ballot and could vote. This included COVID positive voters who came to vote at our offices in the days leading up to election day. In addition to these conditions, voters questioned many parts of what used to be a standard election process – whether it be voting by mail, counting ballots, conducting audits and asking whether their specific ballot could be located to ensure it was counted. It was not uncommon for voters to call on the phone angrily expressing their frustrations or sending a letter in the mail that was less than pleasant.

Now, in 2022, election officials have experienced written notes from voters on blank mail-in ballot applications that were mailed to them expressing their view on mail-in ballots and making various threats, angry phone calls questioning parts of the electoral process, and even social media posts questioning intentions of election officials. In Carroll County, we have even had two separate incidents of empty pre-paid postage envelopes that were sent with the mail-in ballot applications being returned to the office with no return address and filled with suspicious substances that required a call to the local police department for investigation.

Across the country, election officials are resigning from their positions because of the undue stress of people making threats to election officials and their family members. It is increasingly difficult to educate every voter so that they understand that election officials in Maryland are just average people who were hired to work for state or county government and have taken an oath that they will follow all laws and regulations. All work completed is audited and overseen by a Board that is appointed by the Governor.

Election officials just want to feel safe doing their job and they want to have assurance that their families are safe. SB956 helps to address the changing nature of the job of an election official. **Just like elections are part of DHS "critical infrastructure", so are the people who make elections run so that every vote is counted.** I hope you will consider supporting SB956 and support your election officials. If you have any questions, please contact me at Katherine.berry@maryland.gov.

SB 956 Senator Watson FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Ron Watson

Position: FAV

RON WATSON, PH.D
Legislative District 23
Prince George's County

Judicial Proceedings Committee



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The Senate of Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 16, 2022

To Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and the members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill before you today.

Senate Bill 956 is a simple piece of legislation. It expands existing state law protecting elected officials from threats to include local health officers, elections officials, and housing and building inspectors. This bill is not intended to stifle free speech and debate, but instead to promote it through civil discourse. Some may question why include just these three categories of civil servants. The simplest answer is that our counties collectively agreed that these workers experience the gravest and most frequent threats to their well-being in the line of duty. The need for this bill is so great that the Maryland Association of Counties' leadership made it one of their four initiatives for the 2022 legislative session.

Recent news and data supports their position. Since the coronavirus pandemic began two years ago, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) reports more than 300 public health department leaders have left their posts. In Maryland, seven county health officers have departed. At every level of government, threats have been cited as a reason for leaving.

Our elections officials are under similar assault. Just last Thursday, March 10th, the Brennan Center for Justice published a poll stating, "One in six election officials have experienced threats because of their job, and 77 percent say that they feel these threats have increased in recent years." Worse yet, "30 percent of the officials in our poll know of one or more election workers who have left at least in part because of fear for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation. In the long term, 60 percent of officials are concerned that threats, harassment, and intimidation against local election officials will make it difficult to retain and recruit election workers ... 20 percent plan to leave before the 2024 election."

Similar to health officers and elections officials, our code enforcement officers experience regular harassment and threats on the job. To fully appreciate how difficult this work is, there are multiple reports from the American Association of Code Enforcement of these officers being killed or brutally assaulted in the line of duty.

On your floor systems, you can read testimony from representatives of each civil servant category named in this bill. Their stories and experiences are a stark reminder of the dangerous and polarizing times we live in, and why this bill is so necessary.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your favorable vote on Senate Bill 956.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron L. Watson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "W".

Senator Ron Watson

Legislative District 23

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Position: FAV



SENATE BILL 956

Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

Nilesh Kalyanarman, MD, Health Officer, Anne Arundel County

Position: – Support – March 16, 2022

The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) is in **strong support of Senate Bill 956**. In March 2020, facing what would soon become the most significant public health crisis of our time, local Health Officers across the country raced to implement life-saving prevention and mitigation measures in response to the emergence and rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of this pandemic, some members of our communities have disagreed with measures implemented by elected and appointed officials to address the pandemic. Although most people with contrary views have expressed their differences civilly, a small but significant number have acted out with threatening behavior toward elected officials and public health officials. While elected officials already receive protections against threats under Criminal Law Section 3-708, public health officials do not. SB 956 aims to extend this legal protection to public health professionals.

The level of harassment and intimidation toward public health officials and local health department (LHD) staff during the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented. We understand and respect the fact that the public has a right to responsibly speak out on any issue. However, when individuals engage in threatening behaviors that impede our ability to carry out emergency response measures, these actions become a threat to everyone's safety and should not be tolerated. Maryland's local Health Officers and their regulatory enforcement staff have been subject to threats of harm against themselves, and in some cases, their families. Public health professionals are legally bound to carry out the will of the Maryland General Assembly, the Governor, and Secretaries of Health and the Environment. Health Officers and licensed professionals employed at LHDs are hired based on extensive knowledge and specific expertise critical to protecting the health and safety of our communities. Our actions are not about controlling people; they are based on science, evidence, and the law. We realize these decisions may not be popular across the spectrum, but they are necessary to protect health and save lives.

Many Health Officers have received threats, often through social media, along with in-person acts of harassment and intimidation resulting from our legally required duties. In numerous instances, environmental health staff from LHDs have needed law enforcement escorts to carry out their duties because of overt threats. Maryland is one of a few states that lacks specific protection for public health officials and staff. There has been no deterrent to those threatening us harm, so these acts continue. Eight Health Officers and many more public health professionals have left their positions in Maryland during the past two years. Many of these resignations were directly or indirectly spurred by threats suffered in the workplace. At no time should it be acceptable for dedicated professionals to be subjected to emotional and physical threats, but this is especially problematic in an era of workforce shortages. Unaddressed threats also impact our ability to recruit and retain qualified Health Officers and LHD staff, further impacting workforce shortages. SB 956 will not only provide public health professionals with protection equivalent to that currently afforded elected officials, but it will make Maryland a safer state by ensuring a more supportive workplace for its physicians, nurses, and environmental health specialists who dedicate their careers to the well-being of others.

MACHO urges a favorable and timely report on SB 956. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, Executive Director, MACHO, at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.

SB0956 UNF opposed mcavoy.pdf

Uploaded by: vince mcavoy

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE on SB 956

vince mcavoy baltimore maryland

This bill reminds me of that adulterous woman who – just as her husband or boyfriend is about to find out about her adultery – starts having her football-player-sized friends or brothers hang around...all of a sudden. She knows for a fact she's done wrong. She's done grievous actions. She's destroyed where she had been trusted. She pursues evil in **her own household**. But rather than repent, confess and seek forgiveness from her constituents...er, umm...her husband, she doubles down on doing wrong.

When officials act outside of the Constitution, they are correct in presuming not each citizen will catch on immediately. But eventually all dirt is exposed. Eventually, all see that we have socio-pathological traitors in our midst who work in public health.

This isn't about election official or housing authorities. This bill is about illegal actions from the occupying force of nazi-like, medical tyrannists. This won't stand.

And the citizens of Frederick County let it be known.

These public health frauds are found out for the liars and dealers of poison that they are. Stick mRNA into a mother's 3-year-old or a father's 7-year-old because Fauci said so?!

Mask children for so long (as was testified in recent Charles County public forum amid threats of criminalizing non-mask-wearers) that the child won't take off their mask to eat lunch or drink at school?!

It will not stand.

I urge a strong unfavorable for this wretched attempt to whitewash the tombs of those the public health Pharisees have killed through increased child suicides; forced mRNA experimental poisons; unnatural mandates; evil interferences with natural life by deviant Hopkins SPH employees; and deprivation of 14th Amendment rights (including pursuit of work).

humbly offered

~vince