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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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

Judicial Proceedings – February 11, 2020

SUPPORT

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Adat Chaim Congregation
American Jewish Committee
Americans for Peace Now
Baltimore Chapter
American Israel Public Affairs Committee
American Red Magen David for Israel
American Zionist Movement
Amit Women
Association of Reform Zionists of America
Baltimore Board of Rabbis
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance
Baltimore Men's ORT
Baltimore Zionist District
Beth Am Congregation
Beth El Congregation
Beth Israel Congregation
Beth Shalom Congregation of
Howard County
Beth Tfiloh Congregation
B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region
B'nai Israel Congregation
B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation
Bolton Street Synagogue
Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.
Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
Chizuk Amuno Congregation
Congregation Beit Tikvah
Congregation Beth Shalom of
Carroll County
Congregation Tiferes Yisroel
Federation of Jewish Women's
Organizations of Maryland
Hadassah
Har Sinai Congregation
J Street
Jewish Federation of Howard County
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish War Veterans
Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
Jewish Women International
Jews For Judaism
Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah
Hebrew Congregation
National Council of Jewish Women
Ner Tamid Congregation
Rabbinical Council of America
Religious Zionists of America
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
Shomrei Emunah Congregation
Simon E. Sobeloff Jewish Law Society
Suburban Orthodox Congregation
Temple Beth Shalom
Temple Isaiah
Temple Oheb Shalom
Winands Road Synagogue Center
Zionist Organization of America
Baltimore District

Background: Senate Bill 606 (SB606) would ensure that if the race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin of a victim is only partially a motivating factor for the commission of a crime, that the perpetrator can still be charged with a hate crime.

Written Comments: Hate crimes targeted at an individual are often accompanied by another more violent offence. We need to ensure that prosecutors are able to charge these crimes as incidents of hate in addition to whatever heinous crimes were also committed. Rarely does a week go by where we are not alerted of a report of a hate incident in our community. While they range in severity, each incident is disturbing and unacceptable. As incidents of hate continue to rise, this change to the law will unfortunately only continue to be more necessary.

According to the FBI's most recent report on hate crimes, law enforcement agencies from across the nation reported that there were 8,819 victims of hate crimes in 2018. The Bureau found that attacks on Jews accounted for 56.9 % of all religion-based hate crimes, by far the highest of any targeted religious group. 59.6% of all hate crimes victims were targeted because of the offenders' bias against race, ethnicity, or ancestry, in other words simply because of who the victim is. According to the 2018 State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report authored by the Maryland State Police, we have seen a sharp increase in hate/bias incidents over the past decade. This sharp rise affected a geographically and demographically diverse array of Marylanders, with increases seen in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Somerset counties, and Baltimore City. These reported incidents targeted both individual people and some of our most vital arenas for community engagement, including schools, community centers, and places of worship.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on SB606.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.