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Baltimore District



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 541 Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission - Training Requirements - Hate Crimes

Judiciary Committee
February 11, 2020

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 541 (HB541) would ensure that all police officers in Maryland are properly trained on how to respond to hate crimes. This bill lays out training standards for all new officers and those currently serving. Such guidelines would include training on the criminal laws concerning hate crimes, the appropriate treatment of victims of hate crimes, and the procedures for properly reporting hate crime information.

Written Comments: Hate crimes are a unique and ever-changing set of offenses and therefore responders require unique training. They also can have lasting effects on the victims and the communities where the crime occurs. With the number of reported hate/bias incidents as well as the number of hate groups continuing to grow in Maryland, we must address this unfortunate new reality.

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 HB541.

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.