
BILL NO: House Bill 541
TITLE: Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission – Training
Requirements – Hate Crimes
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 11, 2020
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 541 seeks to ensure that all members of law enforcement and those trained under the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission are educated and informed about the existence of Maryland hate crime laws, including how to recognize them, response to them, and report them.

Hate crimes are acts, often of violence or threat of violence, motivated by prejudice and malice and are an attack on a victim's personal qualities – gender, race, color, religious belief, sexual orientation and national origin. Hate crimes are intended to intimidate the victim and the victim's community, resulting in isolation and vulnerability. Therefore, these crimes can cause particularly profound emotional and psychological damages. Hate crimes also result in physical and economic repercussions similar to other crimes.

Hate crime laws matter. In addition to deterring criminal activity, they possess important symbolic meaning that signals to targeted communities that the government cares and that law enforcement will take their concerns seriously. Having worked with the Office of the Attorney General and a coalition of organizations for the past year seeking to find ways to address the rise in hate crimes throughout the state, the WLC firmly believes that increased education and understanding by law enforcement is the first step.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center urges support for House Bill 541.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit, legal services organization that advocates for the rights of women through direct legal representation of individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates two hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County and the state-wide Collateral Legal Assistance for Survivors and Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Projects.