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February 11, 2020

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support - House Bill 917 - 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 917 - "2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law."

As you know, on May 20, 2017, 2nd Lt. Richard Collins, III's bright future was stolen when he was attacked while visiting the University of Maryland. The investigation revealed that Richard was targeted, and that his assailant was a member and participant in racist Facebook groups. While his murderer was charged with a hate crime, the court dismissed the charge. In the dismissal the judge ruled that the current statute requires prosecutors to prove that bias was the sole motivation for the crime – a standard that is difficult to prove and could chill the enforcement of the hate crimes law.

HB 917 will clarify that hate can be one of the factors for the crime, but does not have the sole factor to secure a conviction under the hate crime statute. Closing this loophole will ensure the integrity of our judicial system, send a strong signal that Maryland is committed to protecting vulnerable populations, and hold people accountable to their crimes in totality.

I am gravely concerned that perpetrators of hatred are emboldened by these crimes and the difficulty in prosecuting them. As of 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center tracked 21 hate groups in Maryland alone. Hate crimes, or attacks motivated by bias or prejudice also reached a 16-year high in 2018. If this escalation of hate is going to end in Maryland and across the country, it will be because we all say enough is enough.

I respectfully request favorable consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,



Anthony G. Brown

CC: Members of the Judiciary Committee

AGB/bmw