

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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January 19, 2021

House Bill 286 – Hate Crimes – Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders **POSITION: Oppose**

Dear Chairperson Clippinger, Vice Chairperson Atterbeary, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 286 seeks to add “law enforcement officers” and “first responders” to Maryland’s list of protected classes under the state’s hate crimes statute. The list of protected classes currently includes race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, and homelessness.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights opposes the inclusion of law enforcement officers and first responders because the hate crimes statute, similar to Maryland’s anti-discrimination statute, does not afford protections based on an individual’s profession. Rather, the protected classes enshrined throughout these statutes protect these individuals from hate, bias, and discrimination based on status that may be hereditary, cultural, or otherwise a matter that is not by choice. Additionally, the Criminal Law Article already affords additional protections to law enforcement officers and first responders that are not enjoyed by anyone else within Maryland.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges an unfavorable report on HB286. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.