



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 11, 2021**

**SB 400 – Hate Crimes – False Statement to a Law Enforcement  
Officer**

**FAVORABLE**

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The ACLU of Maryland supports SB 400, which would make it a hate crime to issue a false statement or complaint to a law enforcement officer about a person or group, motivated in whole or substantial part by that person or group's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, or national origin, or because they are homeless.

It is undeniable that marginalized people and groups continue to be targets of violence, threats, and acts of intimidation, and they are already disproportionately targeted for police abuse and arrest for low-level, non-violent offenses. There has recently been ample evidence – often via cell phone recording – of people of privilege and people in positions of power fabricating wrongdoing and seeking to deploy law enforcement to respond to a false threat, which wastes time and resources, but more importantly, puts at risk Black and Brown residents, for whom any police encounter is potentially life-threatening.

Nobody should be targeted and put in danger because of who they are. Someone who makes a false statement to police against someone from a marginalized community does so because they think police will take them at their word. They send a strong message that their personal feelings are more valuable than someone else's life.

SB 400 is a simple bill that takes a powerful step toward ensuring equality under the law, and that we as a society will not tolerate further targeting those who are already at greater risk for abusive practices both by law enforcement and members of the community.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 400.