

House Bill 0438 Crimes – Malicious Destruction of Historically Significant Monument (Monument Protection Act of 2021) Sponsored by Delegate [Mangione](#)

Good Morning Delegates,

I appreciate this opportunity to speak in favor of House Bill 0438, a bill intended to prohibit the malicious destruction of Historically Significant Monuments.

Sadly, throughout Maryland and the United States, there has been a proliferation of monuments being vandalized or destroyed.

Maryland's collection of Monuments is diverse and represents a broad cross section of subjects, time periods and historical events, each in some way culturally, aesthetically, or historically unique and significant. In addition to monuments honoring the sacrifice of our military veterans, there are monuments to historical figures, civil rights leaders, musicians, poets, religious figures, educators, sports legends and even a monument to Baltimore's Harris Glenn Milstead who achieved fame as "DIVINE", playing the role of Edna Turnblad in John Water's 'Hairspray.

Many of the monuments displayed throughout Baltimore City and Maryland's twenty-three counties were sculpted by world renowned sculptors such as Laura Gardin Fraser, whose double equestrian statue is considered one of the finest in the world; Hans Schuler who sculpted the monuments to Casimir Pulaski and Martin Luther, and William Henry Rinehart whose work is displayed in the US Capitol. Such works are irreplaceable and cannot be duplicated, if destroyed

The State of Maryland clearly recognizes the importance of protecting and preserving our historical and cultural heritage as evidenced by the establishment of The Maryland Military Monument Commission and the Maryland Historical Trust.

Baltimore was once proudly referred to as the "Monumental City" and had the distinction of being the first municipality in the United States to design a comprehensive program for the preservation of its outdoor monuments. It is fitting that House Bill 0438 supports the continued preservation of monuments in Baltimore and throughout the State.

Incidents of monument vandalism and destruction are becoming all too common, Sadly, A 225-year-old obelisk monument to Christopher Columbus, said to be the oldest known monument to the Italian explorer in the world, was vandalized and suffered irreparable damage. A monument to Francis Scott Key was vandalized, as was a monument to Revolutionary War hero Casimir Pulaski. The Star-Spangled Banner Centennial monument, donated by children of the Baltimore City Public school system was vandalized, as was the 'Fallen Heroes' monument to Baltimore City Police Officers killed in the line of duty. And recently, most of us will recall a monument of Christopher Columbus being toppled and tossed into Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

Destruction and vandalism to monuments is disturbing on a number of fronts, particularly from a public safety perspective. There was a recent incident in Virginia where a large portion of a monument fell on an individual trying to topple it, nearly costing the individual his life.

The clear sentencing guidelines and penalties provided for in House Bill 0438 will hopefully serve as a deterrent to individuals contemplating the malicious destruction of Maryland's Historically significant monuments. The clearly articulated minimum mandatory sentences and/or fines, upon conviction, establishes that unlawful actions have consequences.

For these reasons, I encourage your favorable support of the bill.

Thank You!

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