

Bill Number: HB 306
Scott D. Shellenberger, States Attorney for Baltimore County
Support

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SCOTT D. SHELLENBERGER,
STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY,
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 306
HATE CRIMES - FALSE STATEMENT TO A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

I write to offer my support for House Bill 306, Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer. This bill would make it a hate crime to make a false statement to a law enforcement officer when the false statement is motivated as a result of the race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability or national origin of another person.

This bill would address an issue, which has been more brought to the public's attention recently as a result of significantly publicized outrageous acts by individuals directed at others because of their race. Last year a black man was accused of threatening the life of a woman in Central Park in New York City when all he wanted to do was bird watch. Just after Christmas, a 14 year old young black man was accused of stealing the iPhone of a woman in a New York City hotel. It is readily apparent that these accusations occurred because of the race of the victims of the false reports. It is a tragic reality that incidents like this occur more often than we would like to think. With the proliferation of cellphones and the ease of recording events, they are being brought more to the public attention. Actions like this should be called exactly what they are- hate crimes. They should also be dealt with more harshly than a false report which is not motivated by hatred or prejudice against a particular class of human beings because of their race, sexual orientation, gender or national origin.

I thank Delegate Jackson for bringing this to the Legislature and ask for a favorable report to give the public and States Attorney's Offices around the State the ability to address such offensive acts by certain people in our communities.