



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 151 Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng – President

Date: January 20, 2022

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports Senate Bill 151. We strongly support this bill's position to strengthen support for disadvantaged communities and protect them from false statements made to law enforcement. On June 25, 2020 at the National Convention of the League of Women Voters of the United States the following resolution was adopted: “The League of Women Voters shall advocate against systemic racism in the justice system...We also call for prompt actions by all League members to advocate within every level of government to eradicate systemic racism, and the harm that it causes.”

As it is more and more common for contentious interactions between individuals to be recorded it has become clear to LWVMD that many marginalized communities feel the unnecessary burden of proving they are innocent for simply existing in any given situation. This can include, but is simply not limited to, standing on a corner, sitting in their car, laying on their couch, or babysitting a friend's child.

LWVMD strongly supports the inclusive language of this bill. Including not just race and ethnicity, but also “color” and “homeless” allows this bill to reach groups that have been left out of the justice process for far too long.

While it is not the goal to criminally charge those who call on law enforcement with real intention our hope is that it will stop those who see law enforcement as their own personal security guards and by effect safeguarding the lives of already disadvantaged individuals and groups.

The League urges a favourable report on SB 151.