



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0151– Hate Crimes– False Statement to a Law
Enforcement Officer
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On January 19, 2022**

Mr. Chair, Vice chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 151 seeks to acknowledge and remedy an ugly, and old, aspect of our society that has been recently highlighted by recent incidents made public across this country and, including, in Maryland. This bill would expand the definition of hate crimes to include false statements made to law enforcement officers based, in whole or in material part, on a person's race, color, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or homeless status.

Senate Bill 151 results from a number of [publicly reported incidents](#) of racially-targeted false reports made to law enforcement against Black Americans across the country. One of the most prominent examples occurred in New York City's Central Park in May 2020, which drew national attention and discussion.

[Christian Cooper](#), a Black man, was in the park bird watching when Amy Cooper, a white woman, called the police on him after he requested that she adhere to park rules and leash her dog. Indignant, Amy Cooper threatened Christian, Cooper warning, as she dialed 911, "I'm going to tell them [the police] there's an African-American man threatening my life." She then made good on her threat, which the public learned was rooted in falsehood because Christian recorded the encounter on his cell phone. Fortunately, the prevalence of cell

phone video is bringing this old and ugly feature of our society to the public's attention in a way that was unheard of not that long ago.

To raise just one example closer to home, Maryland residents and married couple in their mid-fifties, [Bahri and Barbara Wallace](#), experienced something similar but it was not caught on cellphone. One day the Wallaces visited Costco in Arundel Mills as they often did, when a manager, a white man, called 911 because he thought they "fit the bill" of ink cartridge thieves. "I need police immediately at the Costco wholesale" the caller reported. "I have a robbery in progress." The caller described them to the police as an African-American couple. The Wallaces were oblivious of the call and after exiting the store and leaving the parking lot, police officers pulled them over. When Mr. Wallace asked why they had been stopped, an officer told him that a manager at Costco accused them of robbery. As it turns out, there was no robbery, no crime. Just a regular Maryland couple looking to purchase a new refrigerator for their home.

The act of placing a false 911 call against individuals based solely or in material part on the color of their skin, perpetuates racist or discriminatory stereotypes, and further sows distrust between law enforcement and members of historically marginalized communities. It also is a waste of public resources that could be directed toward addressing actual crimes rather than false ones.

Like other states, such as Oregon and Washington, Maryland must be proactive in discouraging and deterring this abhorrent behavior, which has led and will continue to lead to death and other serious consequences for victims. We must take this action to hold individuals accountable for weaponizing discrimination and personal bias, by misusing law enforcement and the emergency calling of 911, to harm others.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report from this committee for Senate Bill 151.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "P".

Jill P. Carter