

LWVMD Testimony SB 151 Hate Crimes - False Stateme

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Position: FAV



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.

MCCR Hate Crimes False Statements.pdf

Uploaded by: Glendora Hughes

Position: FAV

State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

"Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination."



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January 19, 2022

Senate Bill 151 – Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights ("MCCR"; "The Commission") is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

Senate Bill 151 adds to Maryland's hate crime statute a provision that making a false statement to a law enforcement officer motivated by, at least in part, that individual's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, and/or homelessness is a criminal offense under said statute.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports this bill because it is well documented that we have seen, thanks to timely video, individuals who are apt to call police on a person or group simply because of their status as a protected class – especially due to their race, ethnicity, and ancestry. One notorious example of this was in May 2020, when Amy Cooper, a white female, called police on an African American bird watcher who asked her to leash her dog in Central Park. She was charged with filing a false police report because she stated on the call to police that he was trying to assault her, which was not true according to the video recording of the incident. Other examples have included the police being called on an African American Oregon state Representative while she was campaigning in her district or an African American apartment building employee harassed by a woman and her son, who assaulted the employee, because according to their 911 call, it was their business to know why he was at the complex.

Making false statements to police may already be a crime, but it is clear, especially recently, that some individuals will still do so because they are motivated by hate or bias, especially against individuals of color. Maryland's hate crimes statute is in place to prevent these kinds of incidents while protecting people identified in the law from unnecessary harm.

MCCR's Biennial Civil Rights & Fair Housing Gala Celebration: April 30, 2022

William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-1631
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For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable report on SB 151. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.

Testimony_JPC_SB0151_LR1107.pdf

Uploaded by: Jill Carter

Position: FAV



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.

Jill P. Carter

SB 151 - Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law En

Uploaded by: Michelle Siri

Position: FAV

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 151
TITLE: Hate Crimes – False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
DATE: January 19, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 151 seeks to address a very concerning, dangerous, and detrimental practice that has received national attention over the past few years. In particular SB151 will clarify that making a false statement to a law enforcement officer about another party, motivated either in whole, or substantial part, by the latter party's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin, or because another person or group is homeless, will be considered a hate crime.

Hate crimes are intended to intimidate not only the victim but also the victim's community, leaving them feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law. By making members of minority communities fearful, angry, and suspicious of other—and of the power structure that is supposed to protect them—these incidents can damage the fabric of our society and fragment communities. This has been most recently seen in the context of race, when Black men have repeatedly had the police called against them for partaking in legal activities such as sitting in Starbucks, attending a barbecue, or bird watching in a park. Weaponizing the police against communities already marginalized is dangerous, reprehensible, and should not be tolerated.

Hate crime laws matter. In addition to deterring criminal activity, they possess important symbolic meaning that signals to targeted communities that the government cares and that law enforcement will take their concerns seriously. Having worked with the Office of the Attorney General and a coalition of organizations for the past two years seeking to find ways to address the rise in hate crimes throughout the state, the WLC firmly believes that by passing legislation making clear such behavior is criminal, the legislature can assist in stopping these crimes from occurring in the future.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center urges support for Senate Bill 151.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.

SB 151 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Scott Shellenberger

Position: FAV

Bill Number: SB 151

**Scott D. Shellenberger, States Attorney for Baltimore County
Support**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SCOTT D. SHELLENBERGER,
STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY,
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 151
HATE CRIMES - FALSE STATEMENT TO A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

I write to offer my support for Senate Bill 151, 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 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 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.

testimony.SB151.pdf

Uploaded by: Zainab Chaudry

Position: FAV



January 19, 2022

Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB151 – Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer

Dear Chair William C. Smith, Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill **151** entitled Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer sponsored by Senator Jill Carter. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

In recent years, we have seen a significant uptick in the number of reports of racially motivated 911 calls across the nation that have gained national headlines. In April 2018, a 911 was placed to a Philadelphia area Starbucks because two African-American men did not order anything while waiting for a friend to show up. That May, a white Yale student used 911 to summon police on a Black Yale graduate student napping in the common room of her dorm. In the same month, a white woman dialed 911 to report a Black family holding a lakeside barbecue in Oakland, California. In May 2020, a white woman called the emergency number on an African-American man in Central Park who simply asked her to put her dog on a leash. And the list goes on.

These are only a few examples of recent, high profile national incidents, but my organization has also received concerns from community members here in Maryland who feel like their race or religion has been weaponized by individuals who harbor bias towards them. Some have changed their behavior or the way they dress or appear in public; one family has even moved out of their predominantly white neighborhood for fear of being targeted in this way.

The function of law enforcement agencies is to protect and serve. The 911 system was established by AT&T in 1968 after the FCC met with the corporation to explore a means to create a universal emergency number that could be rapidly implemented. Its designated purpose is to summon the police in case of an emergency, but too many people feel entitled to exploit this system to make the police complicit in their racial bias.

It's time for the Maryland General Assembly to take action to prevent these dangerous calls. Needless 911 calls in non-emergency situations are a waste of resources and tax dollars and endanger the lives especially of communities of color who are directly and disproportionately impacted by them. We support this bill because it sets the tone for accountability, and we believe it will help discourage such behavior in the future. Therefore, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
Director, CAIR Office in Maryland
Council on American-Islamic Relations
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Phone: 410-971-6062