



Secular Maryland

secularmaryland@tutanota.com

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HB 645 - SUPPORT

Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer

Dear Chair Luke, Vice-Chair Moon, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

This bill proposes that swatting be prosecutable as a hate crime when it is utilized for the purpose of harassing and endangering minority communities. Swatting has attracted some hate groups as a method to harass those they hate in part because of the low penalties. On July 2020 a founder and former leader of a neo-Nazi group pleaded guilty to conspiring to place emergency phone calls falsely claiming an armed person took hostages that targeted an African American church, a Cabinet official, journalists and others because of their race or religious affiliation. On December 2020 the U.S. Justice Department charged a former Virginia college student with calling in fake emergencies to prompt law enforcement responses, in coordination with a group the FBI labelled as sympathetic to neo-Nazi ideology that targeted people who are black or Jewish.

Mathew Goldstein
3838 Early Glow Ln
Bowie, MD