

BILL NO: Senate Bill 71
TITLE: Hate Crimes – Civil Remedies
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 19, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 71 would provide a civil remedy for individuals who have been the victim of a hate crime. The Women's Law Center supports Senate Bill 71 because it gives victims of these reprehensible crimes a civil remedy to recover for damages for economic and noneconomic harms caused by the acts.

Hate crimes are motivated by prejudice and malice and are an attack on a victim's personal qualities - race, color, religious belief, sexual orientation and national origin. Hate crimes are intended to intimidate the victim and the victim's community, resulting in isolation and vulnerability. Therefore, these crimes can cause particularly profound emotional and psychological damages. Hate crimes also result in physical and economic repercussions similar to other crimes. Victims of hate crimes should have an avenue to access our justice system and the opportunity to be made whole after experiencing the economic and noneconomic damages of these threatening actions.

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 supports the civil remedy created by Senate Bill 71 and urges a favorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership 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. The Women's Law Center operates two legal hotlines, the Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, the Collateral Legal Assistance for Survivors Project, and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.