

WITNESS: Jill Ellen Smith
JURISDICTION: Baltimore County

BILL: HB 1075 (Cross filed SB785)

TITLE: Maryland Department of Emergency Management---Office of Domestic Terrorism Response

POSITION: OPPOSE

I have been a lifelong resident of Maryland and reside in Baltimore County (Catonsville). I have serious concerns about this bill and its impact on Marylanders, however I will only focus here on my concerns as to the appropriations of my tax money and where it is going.

This bill (which I will refer to as (ODTR) has been partially based upon a concern about 'hate crimes' in our state over the last few years. The numbers I see do not justify allocation of my tax money in this direction. In 2018 Maryland reported only 50; in 2019, only 19; and then in 2020 only 40. My understanding is that the justification for this bill is due to the 'high' and increasing rate of hate crimes. Why is 2021 or 2022 NOT considered? Does it reflect the downward trend as those from 2018 to 2020 do? I am unaware of any upward trend in this 'hate crime' narrative and therefore see no justification to spend taxpayer money in this way. We already have a substantive amount of taxpayer money being spent on the 'Re-fund the Police Initiative/ grant program for Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA)/ \$2million for Zero-Eyes gun detection pilot program/ and \$400,000 for an automated ballistics imaging system for our state police.

We have FBI and CIA available on the federal level as well. Why should we be redundant in manpower and funding?

Additionally, violent crimes in Maryland in 2022 has skyrocketed . There were approaching 25,000 violent crimes in 2022. The murder rate of 9.1 murders for every 100,000 people is the ninth highest among states. Maryland's robbery rate of 118 incidents per 100,000 is the highest in the nation.

To allocate Marylander's tax money on 'hate crimes' or 'domestic terrorism' when violent crimes and robberies are off the charts is a negligent use of our state revenue.

Interestingly, Washington state has submitted their own bill (HB1333) to adopt legislation that would set up a commission on 'domestic terrorism'. A study done there in 2022 warned that "effective State intervention to address these threats has the potential to implicate speech or association that may be protected by the First Amendment, or the individual right to bear arms protected by the Second Amendment". Additionally, when the Biden administration attempted to create their own commission on the federal level, they had to retreat from initiating it due to vociferous public criticism.

HB1075 refers to 'maximizing the role institutions of higher education play in researching and developing professional training on the prevention of violent extremist acts/raising awareness among the public about violent extremism, including violent extremism associated with hate crimes and domestic terrorism. This opens the door to incorporating students into identifying

people who align with the parameters that the state deems appropriate. There is no clarity in the bill to define exactly who or what is being targeted. This leaves open the risk of casting an extremely biased and subjective and partisan net that parallels the 'Ministry of Truth' the Biden administration tried to initiate.

According to a study (<https://mynorthwest.com/3843618/rantz-ag-ferguson-conservative-views-terrifying-extremism-commission/>) of the Washington state bill (1333), "groups and individuals opposing critical race theory, mask and vaccine mandates, election fraud, and grooming could be seen by the ODTR as 'anti-government' fascism and engendering white supremacy. This is not a road the proud state of Maryland should consider going down.

Finally, on the topic of 'hate crimes'. This bill makes me feel uncomfortable and concerned for my safety, therefore, the author of this bill could even be accused of committing a 'hate crime'. The definition of a hate crime is wide open to interpretation. I fear this bill will offer a path for our government to abuse it's power and violate my First Amendment Right to Free Speech and Peaceful Assembly