
BILL NO: Senate Bill 5
TITLE: Hate Crimes – Civil Remedies
COMMITTEE: House Judiciary Committee (Cross Over Hearing)
HEARING DATE: March 29, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 5 would provide a civil remedy for individuals who have been the victim of a hate crime. The Women's Law Center supports Senate Bill 5 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 5 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. Our mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. We advance our mission through direct legal representation, information and referral hotlines, and advocacy.