



Secular Maryland

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**HB /45 - SUPPORT**

Hate Crimes - False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer

Dear Chair Clippinger, 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. 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.

Secular Maryland supports bills like this that assist with protecting innocent groups of citizens who are targeted by people motivated by a biased desire to harm them.

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