

March 7, 2023

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1066 (Vogel) - Hate Crimes - Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members,

The Sikh Coalition is pleased to support [HB1066](#), which establishes the Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. This Commission of diverse community representatives from across the state will develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity and evaluate State laws and policies relating to hate crimes.

By way of background, the Sikh Coalition owes its existence in large part to the effort to combat bias against Sikh-Americans after September 11, 2001, including hate crimes and school bullying. Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion, with over 25 million followers around the world and approximately 500,000 here in the United States. As a community that has proudly been a part of the fabric of America for more than 125 years, our contributions to the state of Maryland are rich and deep. Today, in nearly every facet of Maryland's society and economy, Sikhs are making a profound impact - as the state is home to a robust and growing Sikh population, with more than four gurdwaras (Sikh houses of worship).

However, Sikhs remain disproportionately targeted in cases of bigotry, bias, bullying and backlash. Relative to other vulnerable minorities, Sikhs are often disproportionately targeted for discrimination because many Sikhs wear turbans and maintain unshorn hair in accordance with our faith. According to the [FBI's data](#), Sikhs were among the top two most targeted faith groups for hate crimes across the country in 2021. Such violence also manifests in our schools, as a [2014 report](#) by the Sikh Coalition found that turbaned Sikh children are bullied at twice the national average, and 67% of turbaned Sikh students are bullied. There was also a 9 percent [increase in anti-Asian hate incidents](#), despite concerns of underreporting.



We support that the Commission will be representative of a diverse community of representatives from across the state and that they will work together to develop strategies to keep all Marylanders safe. For more information about the Sikh Coalition's support of HB1066, please contact Nikki Singh, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at nikki@sikhcoalition.org.

Respectfully,



Nikki Singh
Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy
nikki@sikhcoalition.org
(732) 924-5945

