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TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

FROM: Zenita Hurley
Chief, Office of Equity, Policy, and Engagement

RE: HB1066- Hate Crimes - Commission on Hate Crime Response and
Prevention – Establishment (**Support w/Amendments**)

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) urges a favorable report of House Bill 1066, Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, with two minor amendments to the composition of the Commission.

Since 2016, hate crimes and hate bias incidents have risen sharply nationwide. Maryland is no exception, having experienced a significant and sustained increase in hate crimes and bias incidents over the past six years, particularly in conduct motivated by bias against a victim's race/ethnicity/ancestry, religion, and sexual orientation.¹ Despite recent enhancements to the State's hate crime laws which expand protected categories and prohibited conduct, standardize reporting, and mandate law enforcement training, Maryland continues to face significant challenges in obtaining complete reporting, engaging law enforcement and community-based organizations in areas impacted by hate activity, and in securing justice for victims through prosecution.

In response to these challenges, in 2019, OAG applied for a Collaborative Approaches toward Preventing and Addressing Hate Crime —Demonstration Projects grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Office was ultimately awarded \$833,000 to implement a 4-part comprehensive response to address hate crimes over a three-year period (Oct. 2021- Sept. 2024) to: enhance community-based partnership by creating an Attorney General Hate Crimes Task Force comprised of law enforcement, civil rights agencies and community-based organizations; develop a statewide hate crime web portal; conduct regional hate crime

¹ This is reflected in the ten-year summary in the most recent [Hate Bias Report](#) issued by the Maryland State Police.

summits; and train law enforcement and prosecutors. The grant also funds a contractual Assistant Attorney General to manage the activities of the Hate Crimes Task Force.

House Bill 1066 would codify the AG Hate Crimes Task Force contemplated under the BJA grant by creating a permanent State Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, chaired and staffed by OAG. Critical to the success of the Commission, HB1066 also requires the Governor to fund a full-time Assistant Attorney General position to staff the Commission. This would allow OAG and the key stakeholder organizations identified in the bill to continue this critical work beyond the term of the grant.

OAG only requests two amendments to the composition of the bill. First, we believe it is important that an organization representing the interests of women be added to the Commission's membership. Second, we ask the Committee to strike the Baltimore County Department of Diversity and Inclusion which we understand was added in error and does not exist. We intend to include representatives from local jurisdictions via the other membership positions, and specifically the representative from the Maryland Association of Human Relations/Human Rights Agencies.

With these minor amendments, we urge a favorable report of HB1066.

cc: Committee Members

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation. For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us