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February 21, 2024

TO: The Honorable Will Smith  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Adam Spangler  
Legislative Aide, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: Senate Bill 650 - Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Notice and Removal of Item  
or Symbol (Hate Crimes Graffiti Removal Act) - **Support**

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The Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 650. Currently under Criminal Law Article 10-305.1, a person may not “place or inscribe” a hate symbol on property without permission and with the intent to threaten or intimidate people. Senate Bill 650 would add a correlating section that says that the owner of property where a hate symbol was placed must remove the hate symbol after being notified by the police. If they fail to remove the hate symbol from the property, the property owner will receive a warning for the first violation, and a civil fine up to \$1,000 for a second or subsequent violation.

According to the most recent data provided by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) hate crimes in Maryland have risen from 89 in 2021 to 221 in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Included in their report the DOJ reported that 44 percent of these hate crimes were crimes against property.<sup>2</sup> Senate Bill 650 seeks

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland: Hate Crimes Incidents in 2022. FBI Crime Data Explorer. <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/state-data/maryland>. (Date Accessed Feb. 16, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> *ID.*

to make sure that owners of property who are not the intended victims of these heinous acts act swiftly to remove these symbols of hate.

A threat against any person based on hate is a threat to all of us. The Office of the Attorney General is committed to ensuring all Marylanders live without fear of being targeted because of their race, gender, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 650.

cc: The Honorable Cheryl Kagan  
Judicial Proceedings Committee Members