



**Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville**  
**HB 699 – Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Notice and Removal of Item or Symbol**  
**(Hate Crimes Graffiti Removal Act)**  
**SUPPORT**

The Rockville Mayor and Council are thankful for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 699. We are thankful to Delegate Vogel for sponsoring this important legislation.

The City of Rockville Mayor and Council unanimously support HB 699. Hate/bias incidents have increased in Maryland. Having hate speech/symbols placed on properties can be harmful to the inclusive community that we are. HB 699 would require law enforcement to promptly notify the property owner after they receive a report of a hate crime item or symbol used to threaten or intimidate that was filed by someone other than the owner of the real estate or the personal property on which the violation occurred. Within 24 hours after the violation was reported to a law enforcement agency, or within 24 hours after the property owner receives notice, the property owner must remove the item or the symbol from the property.

We support the provisions of HB 699 for the following reasons:

- The legislation would facilitate the prompt removal of hate related graffiti which would benefit our community. We currently are working through a time-consuming process to have CSX remove inappropriate language painted on the Park Road overpass near the Rockville Metro Station.
- The legislation aligns with the Mayor and Council’s Resolution 12-21 – Hate Has No Place Here: Condemning and Denouncing All Hate and Hate Motivated Violent Actions, and Rockville’s Justice, Equity, Diversion, and Inclusion program.
- The legislation contains an enforcement penalty. A person who receives a second or subsequent violation after a warning is subject to a civil fine of up to \$1,000.

According to the Maryland State Police’s 2022 Hate Bias Report, Montgomery County had 159 hate-bias incidents, which was the highest number in ten years. HB 699 is an effective tool to combat graffiti hate crimes. It is an important step forward for Rockville and communities across the State. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to provide HB 699 with a favorable report.