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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Notice and Removal of Item or Symbol (SB650)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee: February 21, 2024, 1:00pm

Sadly, **there is an epidemic of hate and bigotry in America**. According to Maryland law, hate crimes are “motivated either in whole or in substantial part by another person’s or group’s race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, or national origin, or because another person or group is homeless.”¹ The most recent hate crime data from the FBI reveals that there were more than 13,000 victims of hate incidents in 2022.² From 2022 to 2023, some American cities saw an increase in hate crimes of as much as 200%.³

Hatred is prevalent on college campuses, in the workplace, and in apartment complexes. In fact, that’s what happened to Delegate Joe Vogel.⁴ When four swastikas were spray-painted in the lobby of his building, he notified property management. But, even after weeks and multiple requests, the swastikas remained, taunting and frightening residents.

Actions like this prompted the introduction of [SB650](#). In our State in 2022, 44% of hate bias incidents were crimes against property.⁵ Whether it is a swastika, a noose, or threatening graffiti, these symbols of hate do not belong in Maryland.

SB650 would require a building’s owner to remove symbols intended to threaten or intimidate within 24 hours of notification by law enforcement or another individual. After a first violation, a civil penalty of \$1,000 would be assessed. Owners who were the intended target of the threatening symbol are exempt, so as not to further punish victims of hate crimes. If the graffiti cannot be removed due to an ongoing investigation, this legislation would apply only after it is no longer necessary for the symbol to remain.

We must work together and build a future where “hate has no home” in the State of Maryland.

I urge a favorable report on SB650.

¹ Article - Criminal Law Statute, §10–304 § (2023). <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=gcr&ion=10-304&enactments=false>.

² The United States Department Of Justice. “Hate Crime Statistics.” Justice.gov. United States Department of Justice, November 14, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>.

³ Yancey-Bragg, N’dea. “Hate Crimes Reached Record Levels in 2023. Why ‘a Perfect Storm’ Could Push Them Higher.” USA TODAY, January 5, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/01/05/hate-crimes-hit-record-levels-in-2023-why-2024-could-be-even-worse/72118808007/>.

⁴ Sanchez-Cruz, Rafael. “Jewish Lawmaker’s Maryland Apartment Building Is Vandalized with Antisemitic Graffiti.” wusa9.com, October 16, 2023. <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/jewish-lawmakers-maryland-apartment-building-is-vandalized-with-antisemitic-graffiti-joe-vogel/65-c1b7d198-43dd-41e8-b007-6ab83b60de8d>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice. “Maryland Hate Crimes Incidents in 2022,” 2023. https://www.justice.gov/d9/2024-01/maryland_hate_crimes_incidents_2022.pdf.