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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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SB650: “Hate Crimes Graffiti Removal Act”

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 1:00PM

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

This fall, swastikas were spray-painted in [my apartment complex](#). Despite the fact this broke our hate crime laws, it took days for this graffiti to be removed. Given the immense and lasting pain these symbols provoke, it is important that a legal requirement be enacted for the prompt removal of graffiti that constitutes a hate crime.

HB699 would require that property owners, upon being notified of a symbol with the intent to threaten or intimidate, remove the symbol within 24 hours of being notified by law enforcement. A civil penalty of \$1,000 is assessed if the owner of a commercially owned property does not remove the symbol after a first violation. Properties that were the target of the hate symbol, for example a swastika on a synagogue, are exempt from receiving a penalty. If the graffiti cannot be removed due to an ongoing investigation, this legislation would apply only after the investigation.

The Anti-Defamation League reports that [Maryland registered the 10th highest number of antisemitic incidents reported in the country for 2022](#). With antisemitic incidents on the rise, we must stand together to reiterate that hate has no home in Maryland. Ensuring that symbols which threaten or intimidate are removed promptly is a step towards realizing this goal.

I urge the committee to give a favorable report on SB650.