

SB650 - Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Notice and Re

Uploaded by: Abigail Snyder

Position: FAV

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 Shomrei Emunah Congregation
 Suburban Orthodox Congregation
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 Temple Isaiah
 Zionist Organization of America
 Baltimore District

Written Testimony
Senate Bill 650 - Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Notice and Removal of
Item or Symbol (Hate Crimes Graffiti Removal Act)
Judicial Proceedings Committee – February 21, 2024
Support

Background: Senate Bill 650 would require law enforcement agencies to promptly notify owners of personal or real property regarding certain items or symbols being placed or inscribed on the property. These property owners would be required to remove the items or symbols **within 24 hours** after notification.

Written Comments: As the advocacy arm of The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, the Baltimore Jewish Council takes on the task of receiving all reports of hate bias incidents in the Greater Baltimore Region. From [vandalizing signs outside of synagogues](#), to [spray-painting swastikas on headstones](#) in cemeteries, these incidents are happening more often than you would think.

News coverage of an [incident at Pikesville Middle School](#) in December where a swastika was found in the boys bathroom with the words “kill the Jews” next to it, quoted an individual who shared that “The boy who found it said he was scared to go back to school the next day....Parents are scared, too.” There is a serious mental toll that comes along with discovering these symbols of hate, and something needs to be done to properly address these crimes.

All you have to do is quickly search “[incidents of hate graffiti Maryland](#)” on Google and suddenly you’re inundated with reports of swastikas, racial slurs, and more. By requiring a property owner to remove these hate items or symbols, including things like nooses and swastikas, within 24 hours or notification from law enforcement, you are sparing so many individuals from the suffering that comes along with seeing these hateful symbols in their community.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on SB650.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

2024-02-21 SB 650 (Support).pdf

Uploaded by: Adam Spangler

Position: FAV

CANDACE McLAREN LANHAM
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General

LEONARD HOWIE
Deputy Attorney General



ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA
Chief Operating Officer

ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY
Chief, Equity, Policy, and Engagement

PETER V. BERNS
General Counsel

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

FACSIMILE NO.
(410) 576-7036

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO
(410) 576-6588

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**

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 2022.¹ Included in their report the DOJ reported that 44 percent of these hate crimes were crimes against property.² Senate Bill 650 seeks

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

² *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

SB 650 Criminal Law- Hate Crimes - Notice and Remo

Uploaded by: deborah miller

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 650–*
Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Notice and Removal of Item or Symbol
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 21, 2024**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 650 which requires law enforcement agencies to promptly notify property owners about items or symbols inscribed on their property. It also requires those owners to remove the symbols within 24 hours after being reported to law enforcement. If the property owners do not comply, they could be fined up to \$1000 dollars. This Bill does not apply to property owners who were the intended target of the alleged violation.

The Jewish community is living in a time of heightened and unprecedented antisemitism. Swastikas, nooses, KKK graffiti, and other symbols of hate – including messages that say, “Kill all Jews,” “Hitler was right,” or “Jews not welcome” – are seen defacing buildings and neighborhoods where children walk to school, and families attend synagogue. These symbols are not only disturbing but can cause real harm and threaten one’s sense of security. The ADL reports that in 2022, antisemitic incidents were up 98% in Maryland from the previous year. This spike includes vandalism which jumped 79%. In Montgomery County, the latest report on religious bias incidents shows that more than 85% targeted Jews, although they make up only 10% of the County population. Finally, since the October 7th Hamas attack in Israel, antisemitic incidents nationwide have reached the highest point of any three-month period since the ADL began tracking in 1979. The ADL recorded a total of 3283 antisemitic incidents across the nation, representing a 361% increase compared to the same period one year prior.

SB 650 will go a long way in making the Jewish community feel safer in its neighborhoods. Owners must take responsibility for their property and remove hateful symbols within 24 hours of being reported. This action will reduce the harm marginalized communities feel when seeing symbols of hate on buildings. For the Jewish community, its mere presence creates a pall; a reminder of the Nazi era where these signs were everywhere. For these reasons we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 650.

SB650 Graffiti Removal Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Joe Vogel

Position: FAV

JOE VOGEL
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Education

Revenues



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 224
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3103 · 301-858-3103
800-492-7122 Ext. 3103
Joe.Vogel@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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.

ADL MD Written Testimony - SB650.pdf

Uploaded by: Meredith Weisel

Position: FAV

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 20, 2024

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
ADL Washington D.C. Regional Director

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of SB650, Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Notice and Removal of Item or Symbol** which would require law enforcement agencies to promptly notify certain property owners of a report of certain items or symbols that constitute an alleged hate crime and require that the items or symbols be removed within 24 hours after the report or notice is made.

Since 1913, the mission of ADL has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Over the past three decades, ADL has been recognized as a leading resource on effective responses to violent bigotry at both the state and federal level. We frequently assist in drafting model hate crime statutes for state legislatures, and we were also privileged to lead a broad coalition of civil rights, religious, educational, professional, law enforcement, and civic organizations working in support of the 2009 Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (“HCPA”) for more than a decade.

Hate crime vandalism is unfortunately a serious concern in Maryland. In the **2021 Maryland Hate and Bias Report** from the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, **27.7%** incidents were reported as vandalism and malicious destruction of property. In the **2022 Maryland Hate and Bias Report** vandalism and malicious destruction of property went up to **29.6%**. The report indicates that vandalism incidents are the most common hate crime offense type in both 2021 and 2022. This data is consistent with ADL’s Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, which specifically tracks a broader set of incidents of vandalism, harassment and assault across the country. In 2022, ADL documented 109 antisemitic incidents in Maryland, 43 of which were vandalism related. We are expecting that number to go even higher for our 2023 audit data to be released later this Spring.

Hateful vandalism incidents are intended to intimidate and terrorize not just the individual whose property is targeted, but entire communities. Their impact, therefore, cannot be measured solely in terms of dollars and cents. This has been particularly true in the wake of the racist, antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ+ vandalism incidents we are continuing to see throughout the entire state. Swastikas regularly being reported in apartment buildings, at shopping centers, near synagogues, or racist images and graffiti near schools, and anti-LGBTQ+ images and words spraypainted on sidewalks or near people’s homes.

At a time when hate and extremism are on the rise, it is critical that Maryland residents and business owners, as well as localities, have the tools they need to address it. **SB650** will help ensure that localities are able to swiftly and expeditiously remove hate symbol defacement from public property and acknowledge the sensitivity to private property owners in the wake of these attacks, giving them the opportunity to conceal the unauthorized and unlawful vandalism before it is removed. We hope that the legislature will continue to support property owners who are already facing trauma and harm due to the impact of the hateful graffiti on their property.

We urge the Committee to release SB650 with a favorable report.

Sen. Kagan Graffiti Testimony (SB650).pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

—
Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

—
Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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.