



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB916 Education - Curriculum Standards - Requirements (Educate to Stop the Hate Act)**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

This testimony is being submitted in FAVOR of SB 916 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury. SB 916 would involve the development of grade-level appropriate evidence-based content and curriculum standards and resources to promote antihate education using associated historical contexts that have led to racism and prejudice in society.

Hate speech and bullying has a deleterious impact on young people jeopardizing adolescents' well-being and social integration. Compounding matter hate in our schools is on the rise. In early 2024, the FBI released a special report about hate crimes in schools finding that hate crime offenses at elementary and secondary schools more than doubled from 2018 to 2022.

Anti-hate education is important because it helps build tolerance, prevent violence, fosters safer schools and communities, promote respect and understanding, increases bystander intervention, and empowers individuals to actively challenge harmful stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors.

Hate crimes and bullying can be prevented by teaching students to recognize and respond to hate speech and behaviors. Further, educating learners about hate helps create environments where everyone feels welcome and safe. Finally, by countering hate speech with truthful information, we can promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

According to the National Crime Prevention Council "Educating police, schools, students, and communities about hate and bias helps create healthy, safe, and violence-free environments in which children can learn. "

A 2023 study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health (Wachs et al., 2023) examined the impact of the newly developed anti-hate speech prevention program, "HateLess. Together against Hatred", on adolescents' empathy, self-efficacy, and counter-speech. The researchers found that antihate education is an effective, cost-efficient approach to enhance adolescents' counter-speech directly and indirectly by altering the skills they need to become informed citizens in democratic societies.

Greenblatt and Koss (2024) explored the impact of multicultural, culturally responsive and anti-bias education as well as critical theory finding that education is the best tool in fighting hate, reducing antisemitism, and influencing policy and practice.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 916 is an important bill that aligns in ensuring that Maryland Schools are safe inclusive environments for all learners, and we recommend a favorable report in committee.

Greenblatt, D. and Koss, M.D. (2024), "Antisemitism as an integral part of anti-bias educational policies and practices", *Journal for Multicultural Education*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 385-395.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-08-2023-0072>

Wachs, S., Krause, N., Wright, M. F., & Gámez-Guadix, M. (2023). Effects of the Prevention Program "HateLess. Together against Hatred" on Adolescents' Empathy, Self-efficacy, and Countering Hate Speech. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 52(6), 1115–1128. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01753-2>