



State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

Respect...Integrity...Effective Communication

March 5, 2025

**Senate Bill 847 - Higher Education - Antihate and Antidiscrimination
Policies and Workgroup (Maryland Campus Accountability
and Modernization to Protect University Students Act)
Position: Support with Amendments**

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Dear Chairperson Feldman, Vice Chairperson Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for enforcing Maryland’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, state contracts, commercial leasing, and health services based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, source of income, and military status. Additionally, under Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety Art. § 2-307, the Department of State Police submits quarterly reports to the Commission on incidents apparently directed against an individual or group because of race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or homelessness.

Senate Bill 847 requires the governing bodies of each institution of higher education to adopt and enforce policies to address racial, ethnic, and religious violence, harassment, and intimidation that are on the rise at our college and university campuses. These policies must include provisions to inform the campus community about their rights; create complaint, adjudication, and disciplinary procedures; and facilitate dialogues with the campus community about incidents occurring on campus. The bill further establishes the Workgroup on Combatting Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Other Forms of Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Violence, Harassment, and Intimidation to develop model policies, guidance, best practices, and recommendations for member institutions, as well as to fulfill the bill’s reporting requirement.

According to the State of Maryland 2023 Hate Bias Report¹ published by the Department of State Police in partnership with the Maryland Coordination & Analysis Center, between 2017 and 2022 the number of hate bias incidents reported across Maryland ranged from 375 to 467 – record numbers when compared to the preceding reported years. During this same time frame, the number of verified reports ranged from 85 (2020) to 183 (2018), again outpacing comparable numbers from the preceding reported years.

¹ <https://mcac.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2023-Hate-Bias-Report.pdf>

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”

However, calendar year 2023, according to the Hate Bias Report, was incredibly troubling. Maryland law enforcement agencies received 951 reports of hate bias incidents across Maryland, 121 of which were verified. The top three identified bias motivation codes within these reports were:

- Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry – 528 incidents, with 363 of those incidents being Anti-Black or African American and 44 being Anti-Hispanic or Latino incidents.
- Religion – 316 incidents, with 284 of those being Anti-Jewish and 26 being Anti-Islamic (Muslim) incidents.
- Sexual Orientation – 134 incidents, with 82 of those being Anti-Gay (Male) and 43 being Anti-LGBT (Mixed Group) incidents.

Meanwhile, among these 951 reports, 326 occurred at elementary/secondary schools and 11 occurred on college/university campuses. All of these record setting numbers coincide with national trends as reported by the FBI.²

As the data shows us since 2017, Maryland should expect these numbers to become the status quo. An increase in acts of hate and bias is being met with increased visibility in the news and on social media. Meanwhile, advocacy organizations, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders and leaders throughout Maryland are doubling down on both improving reporting and addressing the dramatic increase in incidents. SB847 is one important component in Maryland's overall efforts that seeks to build a stronger, more accountable campus community in order to effectively combat acts of hate and bias that are becoming increasingly more common on college and university campuses.

By way of amendments, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights respectfully suggests the following:

1. Maryland's hate crimes statute includes protections based on an individual's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, or national origin, or because another person or group is homeless.³ However, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, and homeless status are excluded from the bases identified within SB847. MCCR respectfully recommends including these protected bases, where appropriate, so that SB847 harmonizes with the existing hate crimes statute.
2. SB847 creates the Workgroup on Combatting Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Other Forms of Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Violence, Harassment, and Intimidation. However, if amendments are adopted to include the additional protected classes within the hate crimes statute, this Workgroup's name will not be inclusive of those classes. MCCR respectfully recommends the adoption of a more inclusive Workgroup name that effectively communicates the Workgroup's important scope of work.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable with amendment vote on SB847. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this

² <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>

³ Md. Code Ann., Crim. Law Art., Title 10

letter. MCCR looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to promote and improve fair housing and civil rights in Maryland.