



TESTIMONY FOR SB0122 CRIMINAL LAW – HATE CRIMES – LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Bill Sponsor: Senator Folden

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0122 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

This bill would include Law Enforcement Officers in the prohibitions against hate crimes. The current law does not specify that Law Enforcement Officers are specifically prohibited from committing hate crimes. It is sad to think that we have to spell out this possibility, but in the past few years, we have come to understand that some Law Enforcement Officers have animus against certain groups or individuals and will harm them or their property if given a chance.

The only difference between Law Enforcement Officers and average citizens committing hate crimes is that we have historically given Law Enforcement Officers the benefit of the doubt due to their commitment to serve and protect. Seeing some of the blatant prejudice and hate that has harmed community after community, we feel that Law Enforcement Officers should be prosecuted just as average citizens if they violate their oath of office.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee