



# State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

*Respect...Integrity...Effective Communication*

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## **House Bill 1435 - Public Safety - Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission - Prohibition Against Certain Affiliation or Support by Police Officers Position: Support**

Dear Chairperson Clippinger, Vice Chairperson Bartlett, and Members of the House Judiciary 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.

House Bill 1435 is a commonsense bill that requires the Maryland Police Training & Standards Commission to prohibit police officers from (1) affiliating with, supporting, or advocating for White supremacist groups, causes, or ideologies, or (2) participating in or actively promoting an international or domestic extremist group that the FBI has determined supports or encourages illegal violent conduct.

In 2023, the Southern Poverty Law Center<sup>1</sup> tracked a total of 25 hate and antigovernment groups in Maryland, 4 of which operated statewide while the other 21 were local organizations. Of these 25 groups, 3 were labeled as “General Hate”, 1 was “Anti-Immigrant”, 3 were “White Nationalist”, 1 was “Neo-Nazi”, and 1 was “Antisemitism”. Meanwhile, according to the State of Maryland 2023 Hate Bias Report issued by the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Coordination & Analysis Center<sup>2</sup>, the number of hate bias incidents reported across Maryland rose from 467 in 2022 to 951 in 2023 – the highest number of incidents in the report’s 10-year snapshot. This data coincides with increased reporting by both the media and the Anti-Defamation League of White nationalist imagery and propaganda incidents reaching record highs.

In today’s climate, Marylanders need to have confidence that our law enforcement professionals are not publicly or privately engaged in any activities or affiliations that promote White supremacy or acts of terrorism against Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color. HB1435 helps to give those assurances while we work collaboratively under larger initiatives to dismantle generations of systemic racism and inequity that continue to plague our justice system in America.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map/?hm\\_year=2023&hm\\_state=MD](https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map/?hm_year=2023&hm_state=MD)

<sup>2</sup> <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.”***

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable with amendment vote on HB1435. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. MCCR looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to promote and improve fair housing and civil rights in Maryland.