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Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and Ethics
Labor

Local Government/Bi-County Agencies
and Administration

House Study Group on Economic Stability



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**HB631: Criminal Law - Threats Against State or Local Official - Penalties
Judiciary
February 10th 2026: 1:00 PM**

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and honorable members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For the record, I am Delegate Matthew J. Schindler, and I am here to present House Bill 631. House Bill 631 increases penalties for individuals who knowingly and willfully threaten to take the life of, kidnap, or cause physical injury to a State or local public official. Those who are duly elected or appointed to serve the public should not be harassed, intimidated, or threatened. The public has both the right and the responsibility to openly criticize and hold public officials accountable; however, that right does not extend to targeted violent threats, which have no place in public discourse.

Unfortunately, threats against judges and public officials are intensifying—not slowing—both here in Maryland and across the country. My community knows all too well about the devastating consequences of political violence and intimidation. On October 19, 2023, Maryland Circuit Court Judge Andrew Wilkinson was assassinated in his driveway for simply performing his duties within our justice system. This tragic act shook our community and served as a stark reminder that public officials can be targeted and killed for doing their jobs.

House Bill 631 is a necessary step to ensure that threats of violence are taken seriously and addressed before they escalate into irreversible tragedy. By strengthening penalties, this legislation reinforces the message that violent threats will not be tolerated and that the safety of those who serve the public is a matter of serious concern. HB631 reflects a responsible and widely adopted approach to protecting public officials. As other states have recognized, ensuring that threats against those who serve carry meaningful consequences is essential to preserving the integrity of our institutions and the rule of law.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 631.