



HOUSE BILL 0631

Criminal Law - Threats Against State or Local Official – Penalties

RICH GIBSON, HOWARD COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR HB 0631

February 6, 2026

My name is Rich Gibson, I am the State's Attorney for Howard County and the immediate Past-President of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (hereinafter MSA). I have served as a prosecutor for approximately twenty years. I write to respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 0631.

House Bill 0631 seeks to ensure that public servants, particularly those charged with administering justice and safeguarding public safety, are protected from threats, intimidation, and acts of violence while performing their official duties. This protection is not a matter of privilege; it is a matter of preserving the integrity of the justice system and maintaining public confidence in its fairness and effectiveness.

The work of prosecutors and public defenders is, by its very nature, community-facing. We engage directly with members of the public every day, often at moments of intense emotional stress. Our responsibilities require us to confront the most serious and troubling conduct occurring within our communities and to interact with individuals facing life-altering consequences. The court process is itself stressful and can heighten fear, anger, frustration, and desperation, increasing the risk of volatile or dangerous behavior directed at those involved in the process.

At the same time, the broader political and social discourse in our country has deteriorated. Disagreement is increasingly expressed through threats, intimidation, and, in some cases, violence rather than lawful advocacy. This reality has created a more hostile environment for public servants whose decisions may be unpopular but are nonetheless required by law and ethics.

The administration of justice depends on the ability of prosecutors and public defenders to act impartially, independently, and without fear of retaliation. When those charged with enforcing and defending the law are subjected to threats or violence, it undermines not only their personal safety but also the public's trust that cases are being handled based on evidence and law and not based upon intimidation.

These concerns are not theoretical. In the past several years, I have personally received death threats, including specific threats to bomb our building, which required immediate coordination with local law enforcement and federal authorities. I have received racist and politically motivated voicemail messages intended to intimidate and demean. While I remained committed to performing my duties without hesitation, no public servant would be expected to endure such conduct as a condition of service. Threats designed to influence or disrupt the administration of justice must carry meaningful consequences.

Some may argue that increasing penalties for threats risks infringing upon free speech or criminalizing expressions of anger or dissent. House Bill 0631 does neither. The bill does not target criticism, protest, or lawful expression. It is narrowly focused on true threats and acts of intimidation; conduct that is already unprotected by the First Amendment and recognized by courts as posing a direct danger to public safety and democratic institutions.

Others may contend that enhanced penalties are unnecessary or ineffective. However, the purpose of HB 0631 is not solely deterrence; it is also affirmation. The bill affirms that Maryland values those who serve the public and recognizes the unique risks inherent in justice system roles. It reinforces

the principle that disagreements with legal outcomes must be resolved through lawful means and never by eliciting fear, coercion, or violence.

House Bill 0631 sends a clear and necessary message: intimidation and threats aimed at those who uphold the law and protect our communities will not be tolerated. By strengthening protections for public servants, the General Assembly strengthens the justice system itself and reinforces the rule of law for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report for House Bill 0631**.

Gibson, Richard

From: Anonymous <b0mvx5p69m@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 10:54 PM
To: Gibson, Richard
Subject: You are going to die.

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

You are going to die because we are going to blow up your office building.

You are going to die because we are still free to do anything.

You are going to die because you cannot arrest us.

You are going to die because you are confident about the security for your office building.

You are going to die because you are sure about where we are.

You are going to die because you are a human even though you are a law enforcement agent.

You are going to die because you are very weak.

You are going to die because none protects you.

You are going to die because none saves you.

You are going to die because you just report this case to someone else.

You are going to die because you cannot investigate us by yourself even though you are able to investigate us by yourself.

You are going to die because you cannot arrest other law enforcement agents such as FBI agents and so on for the reason that they never investigate us by themselves even though you are able to arrest them by yourself.

You are going to die because you do not know that other law enforcement agents such as FBI agents and so on who never investigate us by themselves will be sentenced to death for criminal activities they did already if they investigate us by themselves.

You are going to die because you do not know that other law enforcement agents such as FBI agents and so on who never investigate us by themselves will just report this case to someone else even if you tell them anything in order to let them investigate us by themselves.

You are going to die because you trust other law enforcement agents such as FBI agents and so on.

You are going to die...

Gibson, Richard

From: Anonymous <b0mvx5p69m@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 10:38 PM
To: Gibson, Richard
Subject: We are going to blow up your office building.

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

We are going to blow up your office building.