

To: Maryland House Judiciary Committee Members  
Subject: Testimony in support of HB513

Dear Judiciary Committee Members,

My name is Tina Jones, and my pronouns are she/her. Please allow me to express my approval of HB 513 and share my personal experience with the current Hate/Bias law and the lack of protection provided under it.

On May 20, 2024, the Easton Town Council President made the following statement regarding to the local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community. "I believe it is antithetical to America. I believe it is a socialist endeavor parading beyond or behind the guise of a social movement."

At the June 3 council meeting, the Council President tried to walk back his comments by saying his comments were centered on a budgetary issue. However, using language such as "Antithetical to America" and "a socialist endeavor" does not pertain to budgetary issues, but is instead discriminatory against the LGBTQ+ community.

Not to be outdone, during the council comments portion of the June 3 meeting, another council member went on a tirade against "transsexual ideology" at one point stating transgender people are "a danger to our society". Expressions of disgust regarding those comments are audible in the recording of the June 3 Council meeting. Instead of admonishing the council member regarding his discriminatory comments, the Council President instead chastised community members and asked the council member to continue, thereby permitting the council member to further disparage transgender people.

After these meetings, I contacted the Office of the Attorney General and at their direction, filed a Hate/Bias incident report with the Talbot County Sheriff's office. Not long after, the Baltimore Sun published an article on the events of May 20 and June 3.

At the July 1, 2024, Easton Town Council meeting, the Council President read a letter from the Talbot County Sheriff. This letter (1) indicated that no crime had been committed (nor was a criminal complaint filed), (2) that Article the Constitution protected as free speech the vitriol directed at me and others at the May 20 and June 3 Town Council meetings, and (3) that state law provides immunity to elected officials during official proceedings.

In October 2025, after the State released its annual Hate/Bias report and listed no hate/bias reportings in Talbot County, I discovered that my filing had never been reported to the State by the Sheriff's Office as required by law.

Unable to get any answers as to its status and at the direction of the Office of the Attorney General, I requested and paid for a copy of the originally filed complaint. On December 16, 2025 that complaint was shared with the AOG, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, and the State Prosecutor's Office with a courtesy copy to the Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs. At that time, I asked to learn the official findings from my complaint, what actions would be taken, and what potential improvements to the Hate/Bias Complaint processing system. To date, I have not received a written response to my request from any of those contacted.

The current hate/bias statute, and all processes designed to support it and protect me have failed miserably. Instead of feeling valued and protected by my state, I am only more distrustful of state and county agencies. Please help me rebuild my confidence in my State and local jurisdictions. Please pass HB513 and reform Maryland's Hate/Bias system.

Respectfully,

Tina Grace Jones, she/her  
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