



January 29, 2020

**Senate Bill 161**

**Crimes - Hate Crimes - Use of an Item or a Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate**

**Committee: Judicial Proceedings**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Unfortunately, we have seen a rise in the number of hate bias incidents involving the symbols identified in this Bill to threaten and intimidate individuals and groups of people in Anne Arundel County and elsewhere. According to Maryland State Police statistics, hate crime incidents rose by 116 percent between 2015 and 2016. The most recent Hate Bias Report from the Maryland State Police shows that reported incidents increased from 203 in 2015 to close to 400 in 2018. The symbols identified in this legislation - nooses and swastikas - are used to intimidate and threaten specifically targeted minority groups. We must make clear to all Marylanders that incidents of hate will not be tolerated. In order to do that, Maryland Law must give law enforcement the tools to prosecute offensive behavior.

Senate Bill 161 prohibits a person from placing a noose or swastika on any building or real property without permission, with the intent to threaten or intimidate any person or group. I want Anne Arundel County to be welcoming to all of our residents, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other label. I believe Senate Bill 161 will help make that message clear.

Hate of any kind has no place in Maryland, and that includes the traumatizing impact these symbols have on the communities they target. SB 161 would give Maryland another means to hold those who commit this type of targeted hate responsible.

I support this legislation because we must use every tool to combat bigotry, racism, and antisemitism in Anne Arundel County and across the state.

**I urge a FAVORABLE report on SB 161.**

Steuart Pittman  
County Executive