

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.



Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, I

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TESTIMONY OF KURT WOLFGANG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REGARDING HB917 and SB 606

It is an honor to represent the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center in providing testimony on these bills.

Simply put, a crime legislation is the most essential kind of criminal legislation. It addresses an evil of our society that must be assigned the highest priority for punishment: that evil is decided to harm someone in some way based on their race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, homeless status, gender, or disability. Our Lord society has chosen to especially punish these crimes due to the pernicious motivation, and it is right to do so.

Unfortunately, the law as written needs revision, and there is no more painful and poignant case than that of the murder of Lieutenant Richard Collins III to illustrate.

Lieutenant Collins was murdered on the street by someone who we know was crazed with race hatred, and with no apparent motivation other than race hatred to end the promising life of a young man starting the third generation of service to the country he loved. Due to the weak language in the law, the judge felt compelled to dismiss the hate crime charge against the murderer. I choose not to speak his name.

It is imperative that the legislature ensure that hate crimes are treated with a higher order of priority and punishment than other offenses. By their very nature they tear at the fabric of our society and must not be tolerated.

The State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy, and the lead assistant on this case Jonathan Church and his colleagues, prosecuted this matter impeccably. Mr. Church and others have taken the time to dissect the issues, and provide language to amend this bill that they believe will make the difference in the next case of a hate crime that comes before them. There is no doubt that there will be another case. Despite the efforts of good people to move society forward, there is never a shortage of hatred nor crime. Neither with this legislation put an end to either. But it will provide a more

just outcome, and ensure that a most offensive crime is treated with the proper societal contempt and priority.

About our organization:

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc., formally known as the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, was formed in 1982 to champion the cause of justice for crime victims. Every year since that time, the organization has appeared before this committee seeking just solutions for victims of crime. We have championed and authored more than one hundred laws to date. Through the tireless efforts of our founders, the late Captain Vince and Roberta Roper, and a dedicated cadre of others, the organization is internationally recognized as a leader in assisting crime victims.

Mr. Wolfgang was one of the original founders of the organization, and lobbied for the original bills sought on behalf of the Stephanie Roper Committee in Annapolis. He served as an Assistant State's Attorney in Prince George's County, as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs to the National District Attorney's Association, and served on the Board of Directors of MCVRC for many years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kurt Wolfgang". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a distinct "W".

Kurt W. Wolfgang, Executive Director