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Baltimore District



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 989 (SB989) – Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Penalty (Educate Against Hate Act)

Judicial Proceedings Committee February 11, 2020

SUPPORT

Background: SB989, with sponsor amendment, would allow the court to require an individual who is convicted of a hate crime to undergo at least eight hours of education on the group or community of whom the hate crime was perpetrated against.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) and Maryland's Jewish community are concerned about the recent rise in hate/bias incidents in Maryland and the damaging effect that is having on our communities. These incidents are impacting not just Jewish communities, but those of other religions and racial minorities. According to the 2018 State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report authored by the Maryland State Police, there has been a sharp increase in hate/bias incidents over the past decade. 2018 saw the second-largest number of incidents in the last 10 years. Incidents were reported in all 24 jurisdictions with Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties reporting the most incidents. These reported incidents targeted both individuals and some of our most vital arenas for community engagement, including schools, community centers, and places of worship. No place, person, place or part of our state is immune to these kinds of hateful incidents.

Education and understanding will always be the most powerful tools that we have for combating hate. If we truly want to make sure those who have committed hate crimes are able to grow from their past misdeeds, it is important that we are not just punishing offenders but using every tool in our arsenal to reduce the likelihood of them committing more acts of hate.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on SB989.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.