

Testimony in Support of SB989
Educate Against Hate Act of 2020
Senate judiciary Committee
February 11, 2020

I am writing about the Educate Against Hate Act. I am criminal defense attorney who has represented persons charged, and convicted, of hate crimes. I have always sought education and community service for my clients to help them understand the offense and their actions. There is nothing in place currently to address these individuals. It is up to the individual charged, or attorney, to locate specific training or community service. Recently, I defended a young man accused and convicted of a hate crime in Howard County. He and three friends painted religious and racial symbols of hate at their high school. It was up to each person accused and their attorneys to locate and recommend education and community service. At least two of the men went to the Holocaust Museum in DC and wrote an essay about their experience there. My client did community service at an African American Church and at the Jewish Museum. But there is nothing in place in terms of education for these individuals. When someone is charged with a drinking and driving offense or drug offense, there is practically an education facility on every corner. It would be nice to have something in place for hate crimes. Education is truly the only cure for these types of crimes. Many of the individuals convicted of hate crimes get time in jail for the actual hate crime, even if the underlying crime would not merit it. In my Howard County case, it is commonplace for an individual charged with malicious destruction of property to get probation for a first offense. The hate crime in that case elevated it to one that the court though merited jail. I believe it was a total waste of time to put my client in jail. It cost the taxpayers money and he sat idle for 27 days when he could have been doing service in the community. He learned far more about his offense by the over 175 hours of community service he had done voluntarily before he was sentenced. I certainly hope this bill passes. I do think, however, it should require more than 8 hours.

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