



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB128
Educate Against Hate Act of 2021

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
January 26, 2021 • Judiciary Committee

What the Bill Does:

HB128 (Educate Against Hate Act of 2021) provides a path to restorative justice for hate crimes. This bill passed the Senate last year and since then, we have worked with several fantastic advocacy groups to strengthen it.

As amended, HB128 would do two things. First, it would conform the law to current legal definitions of gender and gender identity. Second, it would allow judges to sentence hate crime offenders to an anti-bias curriculum created by the University of Maryland system.

Why the Bill is Important:

Over the past few years, hate has reared its ugly head too many times in Maryland. In 2017, an assailant viciously beat a gay man in Baltimore City while screaming homophobic slurs. The same year, a white student stabbed Army 2nd Lt. Richard Collins III, a black man, on the University of Maryland campus in College Park. In 2018, the KKK dropped fliers in Ellicott City, Sykesville, Glen Burnie, Eldersburg, Lothian, and South Baltimore that said “the Jews want to take over the world” by supporting immigration as a way to “bankrupt” the United States.

Hate crimes remain a major issue. [According to the FBI](#), in 2019, there was a 14% increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes in the United States. Recently, there has been a significant spike in hate crimes in Maryland compared to other states, with 81 hate crimes reported in Maryland just last year. [The Associated’s 2020 Community Survey also found](#) that nearly two out of every 10 adults in Baltimore in 2019 reported experiencing some form of anti-Semitism. Additionally, there has been a swell of extremist activity in Maryland as the number of radical hate groups including neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and Islamophobic groups, has [grown from 18 to 21 in the last three years](#).

VAUGHN STEWART
Legislative District 19
Montgomery County

Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Environment

Land Use and Ethics



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 220
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3528 · 301-858-3528
800-492-7122 Ext. 3528
Vaughn.Stewart@house.state.md.us

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Several states and countries have combatted hate crimes with education. A San Diego program called PATHWAYS to Tolerance included 62 young people with prior hate crime offenses; none of the participants reoffended. A New York juvenile diversion program yielded a very low recidivism rate after short-term follow-up. Similar programs in Germany, Sweden, and the UK continue to yield successful results. For example, the Germany program yielded a recidivism rate of about 25%, compared to a nearly 80% recidivism rate for comparable offenders who didn't complete the program.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably:

Given rising hate crimes and a tense political environment, now is the time for meaningful action. Our current system of punishment does not effectively deter future crime. Unless we attack this problem at its root, we will be facing many more instances of hateful acts and many more instances of pain and trauma.

I urge a favorable report on HB128.