

# Maryland Jewish Advocacy

DAY & RECEPTION 2019



## Hate Crimes – Property – Damaging or Threatening to Damage

### What is Senate Bill 232 and House Bill 240 (SB232/HB240)?

SB232/HB240, sponsored by Senator Bobby Zirkin and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg, would expand current law regarding hate crimes to include *threats* to damage, deface or destroy property based on race, religion, gender, ethnic identification, sexual orientation, disability, homelessness or nationality. The current state law only addresses real damage, not threats. The bill would also increase the penalty for such acts to a misdemeanor. To address the underlying cause of the crime, the court may also require upon release that the perpetrator attend educational classes or perform community service related to the group targeted by the crime, at the discretion of the Judge.

### Why is SB232/HB240 good for Maryland?

SB232/HB240 aims to directly address the recent rise in hate/bias incidents in Maryland and the damaging effect they are having on our local communities. According to the 2017 State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report authored by the Maryland State Police, reported hate crimes rose by 35% from 2016 to 2017. This sharp rise affected a geographically and demographically diverse array of Marylanders, with increases seen in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Somerset and Wicomico Counties as well as Baltimore City. These reported incidents not only targeted individuals, but attacked some of our state's most vital arenas for community engagement, including schools, community centers, and places of worship. The report reveals that the majority of these hate incidents involved vandalism or verbal threats. Though vandalism is addressed in current state hate crime laws, the existing law fails to address threats to deface, damage, or destroy property.

### How Does SB232/HB240 impact the Jewish community?

In 2017 Maryland's Jewish community faced a frightening string of bomb threats against its community centers, places of worship, and schools. These incidents were only one part of a larger trend. The Jewish community was the 2nd most common target of hate/bias incidents reported to the Maryland State Police in 2017, with anti-Semitic incidents accounting for 19.6% of reported crimes. These statistics are even more troubling when considering how many hate crimes go unreported due to fear or intimidation of the targeted groups or individuals.

### What Can Be Done?

Tell your legislator that you support SB232/ HB240.