

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON HATE CRIMES RESPONSE AND PREVENTION

2023 - 2024
Annual Report

“There is no home for hate in
Maryland.”

Attorney General and Commission Chair
Anthony G. Brown

www.nohomeforhate.md.gov



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A Message from the Chair

Dear Marylanders,

Ensuring that every Marylander feels safe in their home, neighborhood, and places of worship and work, regardless of where they live, who they are, or who they love, is one of the most important responsibilities of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). To that end, the General Assembly established the Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention (the Commission) in the OAG. Pursuant to Chapter 773 of 2023, the Commission is charged with developing strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity and evaluating State laws and policies relating to hate crimes.

I am honored to Chair the Commission and present its first annual report to the General Assembly and the Maryland State Department of Education. It is our hope that these recommendations send a clear message: there is no home for hate in Maryland.

The Commission's work could not be more relevant today. There has been a sharp increase in hate incidents across the country, and Maryland is no exception. Last year, we saw more than double the number of these disturbances reported to local law enforcement compared to 2022. These figures are likely an undercount.

To that end, our policy recommendations focus on clarifying and defining the terms within existing hate crime statutes. The lack of clarity in our current law makes it difficult to assess how common these incidents are and hinder law enforcement's ability to accurately determine how often our State's residents experience hate. This will provide our law enforcement agencies and the people of Maryland with a clearer understanding of what incidents can and should be reported when someone is the victim of hate.

The Commission has also identified other areas for research that could inform future recommendations. These issues, which will be covered in this Report, come from our committees: Addressing Hate in Schools, Community Engagement, Law Enforcement, Online and Cyberbullying, and Restorative Justice. Addressing the issues raised by our committees will bring us closer to achieving our goal: a state free of hate.

I strongly encourage the General Assembly to implement these recommendations to enhance safety for all residents of the State of Maryland. I commend the Commission for establishing a solid foundation for the work that lies ahead. These steps will serve us well as we drive meaningful change and innovation in response to the rise in hate incidents across our state.

To every Marylander who has shared your concerns and ideas with the Commissioners by attending forums or participating in committee meetings, thank you. Together with our Commissioners, you are doing difficult yet vital work to make our state safer for all. Your combined efforts will help Maryland to heal from hate.

Anthony Brown

Attorney General

Commission Members

As mandated by State law, the Commission is currently composed of 25 members representing various government agencies, non-profits, and academic institutions. Commissioners serve staggered terms. The Commission is required to submit its first annual report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly and Maryland Department of Education on or before December 1, 2024.

The Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention is made up of the following members:¹

- Anthony G. Brown, Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Commission Chair
- Jennifer Brown, Director of Community Engagement Department, On Our Own of Maryland*
- Kate Bryan, Executive Director, Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS)
- Kirsten Gettys Downs, MEJC Director of Systemic Reform, Maryland Office of the Public Defender*
- Christine Dulla, Deputy State's Attorney, Queen Anne's County State's Attorney's Office, Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
- David Engel, Director, Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC)
- Domonique Flowers, Staff Attorney, Maryland Pro Bono Resource Center
- Ama S. Frimpong-Houser, Legal Director, CASA*
- Michael Gray, Deputy Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI MD)*
- Cleveland L. Horton II, Executive Director, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)
- Zenita Wickham Hurley, Chief of Office of Equity, Policy, and Engagement, Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
- Carmen Jackson, Volunteer with Carver Community Center, Women's Action Coalition, and the Allegany/Garrett Citizen Review Board
- Vicki Jones, President of Harford County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), City of Havre de Grace City Council Member*
- Orlando Lilly, Superintendent Natural Resources Police Department, Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

¹ The Office of the Attorney General is assessing who will fill the one vacant position.

- Rachel Lindley, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Maryland Office of the Public Defender
- Carissa Mattern, Case Manager, Police Accountability Division of the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights*
- Gabriel Maximilian Moreno, Chief Executive Officer, Luminus*
- Deborah Miller, Director of Maryland Government and Community Relations, The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC)*
- Katie Curran O'Malley, Executive Director, The Women's Law Center*
- Nina Ovian, Victim Advocate Coordinator, FreeState Justice*
- Sylvia Royster, Director of Educational Partnerships, College of Southern Maryland*
- Everett Sesker, Anne Arundel County Sheriff, Maryland Sheriffs Association
- Adileh Sharieff, Social Services and Outreach Volunteer, Islamic Center of Maryland*
- Joraver Singh, Member, The Sikh Coalition*
- Yolanda Sonnier, Director of Howard County Office of Human Rights, Maryland Association of Human Relations/Rights Agencies
- Lanlan Xu, Chair, Howard County Asian American Pacific Islander Commission*

* These Commissioners are serving in an acting capacity until they are confirmed by the Maryland Senate in the upcoming legislative session.

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Background

The establishment of the Commission of Hate Crimes Response and Prevention was the culmination of several years of work by the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to combat hate in the state of Maryland.

In 2016, the OAG created the Hate Crimes Hotline for Marylanders to report hate crimes and hate bias incidents.² This hotline is still active today. It provides victims an opportunity to share their experiences and be connected to law enforcement and community resources after they have experienced a hate incident.

In 2019, the OAG continued efforts to combat hate activity and established a Hate Crimes Task Force which included law enforcement, civil rights agencies, and community-based organizations from across the state who were all dedicated to eradicating hate in Maryland. The Task Force would later be codified and become the Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention. Following the hotline and the establishment of the Task Force, OAG issued guidance in 2020 on reporting hate crimes and hate bias incidents to inform people on what steps to take when an incident occurs.³

In November of 2021, the OAG launched a 3-year effort, supported by a U.S. Department of Justice grant of more than \$800,000 to combat increased hate crime activity in Maryland. The OAG was to enhance community-based partnerships through the AG Hate Crimes Task Force, provide law enforcement training, develop a hate bias/hate crime web portal, and conduct regional hate bias forums. This grant has been extended an additional year.

Commission Work

The Commission accomplished the following tasks during its first year:

- Appointed Inaugural Commissioners following the Passage of HB1066 in 2023
- Established Committees
- Adopted Operating Guidelines to govern the work of the Commission
- Established StopHate email to compliment the OAG Hate Crimes Hotline
- Conducted five Commission meetings and a workshop on dialogue
- Appointed new Commissioners following HB0763 in 2024

² <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2016/111716.pdf>

³ https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/CivilRights%20Documents/Hate_Crimes.pdf

- Helped to advance Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant Activities
 - Created online reporting and resource portal
 - Participated in Regional Hate Bias Reporting Forums
- Hosted and Attended various hate crime conferences and events

Inaugural Commissioner Appointments

In May of 2023, House Bill 1066 codified the AG Hate Crimes Task Force into a permanent commission to ensure this work continues.⁴ The Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention is charged with evaluating state laws and policies on hate crimes and developing strategies to address and prevent hate activity.

In its first iteration, the Commission consisted of eight members from named governmental organizations, thirteen members from named organizations or groups representing protected classes, and two members of the general public. These members were appointed by Attorney General Anthony Brown.

Members in September of 2023: ⁵

- Anthony G. Brown, Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Commission Chair
- Larry M. Bell Jr., Commander of Towson University Police Department Patrol Bureau, Towson University*
- Peter Berns, General Counsel, Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
- Ra'mona Brown-Carter, Chair, Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism (COVE)
 - Restorative Justice Committee Chair
- Kate Bryan, Executive Director, Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS)
 - Addressing Hate in Schools Committee Co-Chair
- Zainab Chaudry, Director, Council on American-Islamic Relations Maryland Office (CAIR)
 - Addressing Hate in Schools Committee Co-Chair
- David Engel, Director, Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC)
- Kate Farinholt, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI MD)

⁴ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/bills/hb/hb1066T.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/080223.pdf>

- Willie Flowers (later: Kobi Little), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Maryland State Conference (NAACP MSC)
- Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Co-Chair
- Pat Jones, Executive Director, Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC)
- Steve Kroll (later: Christine Dulla), Deputy State's Attorney, Queen Anne's County State's Attorney's Office, Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
- Cleo Manago, CEO, Pride Center
- Darryl McSwain, Maryland National Capital Park Police Chief, Maryland Chiefs of Police Association
 - Law Enforcement Committee Co-Chair
- Sarah Mersky Miicke, Deputy Director, Baltimore Jewish Council
- Deborah Miller, Director of Maryland Government and Community Relations, The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC)
- Laure Ruth (later: Katie Curran O'Malley), Executive Director, The Women's Law Center
- Everett Sesker, Anne Arundel County Sheriff, Maryland Sheriffs Association
- Joraver Singh, Member, The Sikh Coalition
- Meredith Weisel, Regional Director for MD, DC, VA, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
 - Online/Cyberbullying Committee Co-Chair
- Yolanda Sonnier, Director of Howard County Office of Human Rights, Maryland Association of Human Relations/Rights Agencies
 - Community Engagement Committee Chair
- Phillip Westry (later: Lauren Pruitt), Legal Director, FreeState Justice
 - Lauren Pruitt – Online and Cyberbullying Committee Co-Chair
- Sam Williamson, Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Maryland*
- Lanlan Xu, Chair, Howard County Asian American Pacific Islander Commission

*These were the members of the general public and not from an organization or group named in the statute.

These members changed after HB0763 was passed during the 2024 legislative session.⁶

Committees

During the first meeting of the Commission in 2023, the idea of committees was brought up to support the Commission's work between meetings. Ultimately, the Commission established five Committees: Addressing Hate Crimes in Schools, Community Engagement, Law Enforcement, Online/Cyberbullying, and Restorative Justice.

All committees consider the following in their work: what data they need to collect and the process for collecting it; an evaluation of current best practices and current state laws; what measures can be taken to prevent hate crimes and hate bias incidents in their area of focus; and costs associated with any new policy recommendations (and if needed, a funding strategy).

After the Commission was reconstituted in 2024, a document of priorities identified by the original committees was created to share with the new commissioners (See Appendix B). This allowed for the work that had already been completed to be built upon by the new Commissioners.

Committees aim to meet once a month, often with tasks completed between meetings. Each committee has a group of Commissioners who are dedicated to keeping the work moving forward, and Commissioners are welcome to attend other committee meetings as well if they so choose. All committee meetings are open to the public with a sign-up form for the general public on the OAG hate crimes resource portal.

Addressing Hate Crimes in Schools

The Addressing Hate Crimes in Schools Committee focuses on: recommending training for teachers to combat hate activity; identifying strategies for engaging parents and caregivers; recommending tools for students; the impact of curriculum on hate activity; addressing reporting challenges for hate crime activity in schools; and best practices and training for school resource officers.

The committee is co-chaired by Commissioners Kate Bryan and Domonique Flowers. Members include Commissioners Lanlan Xu, Vicki Jones, and Katie Curan O'Malley.

⁶ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/bills/hb/hb0763E.pdf>

Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Committee focuses on: recommending community outreach/media campaigns like “see something, say something;” identifying strategies for addressing the unique needs of each protected class covered by Maryland’s laws including but not limited to homeless persons, people with disabilities, immigrant communities, racial minorities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community; evaluating whether additional groups should be added to those protected by the State’s hate crimes laws; and recommending strategies for supporting victims including how community organizations can assist in improving hate crime reporting.

The committee is co-chaired by Commissioners Yolanda F. Sonnier and Adileh Sharieff. Members include Commissioners Jennifer Brown, Gabriel Moreno, and Deborah Miller.

Law Enforcement

The Law Enforcement Committee focuses on recommending steps law enforcement agencies can take to improve the response to hate crime activity including by increasing diversity among officers, providing training on hate crime investigation and prosecution best practices, and designating hate crime liaisons.

The committee is co-chaired by Commissioners Cleveland Horton and Carmen Jackson. Members include Commissioners Christine Dulla, Orlando Lilly, and Joraver Singh.

Online and Cyberbullying

The Online and Cyberbullying Committee focuses on how online gaming and social media is used to spread/encourage hate and best practices in governing these spaces.

The committee is chaired by Commissioner Carissa Mattern. Members include Commissioners Everett Sesker, Michael Gray, Rachel Lindley, and Dave Engel.

Restorative Justice

The Restorative Justice Committee focuses on strategies for promoting healing within communities for both perpetrators and victims and identifying areas for non-law enforcement intervention.

The committee is chaired by Commissioner Sylvia Royster. Members include Commissioners Ama S. Frimpong-Houser, Kirsten Gettys Downs, and Nina Ovian.

StopHate Email

While the Hate Crimes Hotline operated by the OAG was established in 2016, there was no OAG email dedicated to reporting hate activity. This meant that all email communications about hate incidents or the OAG's initiatives around hate were sent to individuals or to the Civil Rights email operated by OAG.

Given the broader range of operations of the OAG and the creation of the Commission, the Stop Hate email (stophate@oag.state.md.us) was established in 2023. This gave the public a place to connect with OAG around addressing hate in Maryland. Since its development, the email has also been used to respond to individuals who submit reports to the newly developed reporting portal.

Operating Guidelines

In November 2023, the OAG recognized the need for operating guidelines to guide the conduct and communications of Commissioners.

A draft of these operating guidelines was developed by the OAG and distributed before December 13, 2023, Commission meeting. This gave Commissioners a chance to review them before bringing their questions and concerns to the meeting. Feedback received from Commissioners ensured that the operating guidelines referenced all protected classes and included a list of resources for Commissioners at the end of the document if they had questions.

Following this meeting, the OAG worked to incorporate the feedback that was presented at the meeting and create a final draft. This review and editing process took place throughout December and January.

The Operating Guidelines were finalized and adopted in February of 2024 (See Appendix A).

Commission Meetings and Dialogue Workshop

Since the Commission was established during the 2023 legislative session, it has met five times.

Three meetings were with the first iteration of the Commission between September of 2023 and May of 2024. These meetings focused on welcoming

the commissioners, creating operating guidelines, and explaining the application process respectively.

Commissioners also convened on March 26, 2024, to participate in a dialogue workshop. At the OAG's request, the Center for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies (ICJS) agreed to lead a workshop on interfaith dialogue to help Commissioners gain the skills needed to have conversations around difficult topics with individuals of different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. ICJS walked the Commissioners present through exercises to explore scenarios in which they may find dialogue more useful than debate.

Since no discussion of Commission business took place at this training, the training was not open to the public or recorded.

Following the appointment of new Commissioners, the Commission met again on September 17, 2024, and November 18, 2024. These meetings were dedicated to onboarding new Commissioners, reviewing the work of the prior Commission, reconstituting committees, and identifying policy recommendations for inclusion in the first annual report.

Appointment of New Commissioners

During the 2024 legislative session, House Bill 763 (HB0763) was drafted to change the makeup of the Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention. This new law removed all designated non-governmental organizations from the Commission. In turn, the bill required the Attorney General to appoint, with the advice and consent of the Senate, fifteen members to represent or advocate on behalf of the groups protected under Maryland hate crimes law. The bill also added the Maryland Office of the Public Defender as a named governmental organization and continued to include two members of the general public.

Following the passage of HB0763, the terms of all Commissioners serving at that time terminated on June 1, 2024.

In preparation for this event, the OAG announced on May 8, 2024, that it would begin accepting applications for Commissioners.⁷ The committee for reviewing applications and recommending new commissioners to Attorney General Anthony Brown was comprised of three members of the Office of the Attorney General and three individuals from organizations that were appointed to the Commission under HB0763.

⁷ <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/050824.pdf>

The review committee conducted outreach and evaluated applications for the fifteen individuals who would represent and advocate on behalf of a protected class. The committee also made recommendations for the two members of the general public. Individuals from appointed organizations were recommended by their organizations.

On July 31, 2024, the OAG announced the majority of the new Commissioners.⁸ The final acting Commissioner was appointed on September 26, 2024.⁹ Commissioners represent Marylanders from across the state and from all protected classes in the Maryland hate crimes statute. The fifteen members who represent or advocate on behalf of a protected class will go before the Maryland Senate for confirmation during the 2025 legislative session.

Federal Grant Activities

As mentioned above, in November of 2021, the OAG launched a 3-year effort, supported by a U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance grant of more than \$800,000 to combat increased hate crime activity in Maryland. Under the grant, the OAG seeks to enhance community-based partnerships through the AG Hate Crimes Task Force, provide law enforcement training on hate crime investigation and prosecution, develop a web portal for hate bias incident/hate crime resources and reporting, and conduct regional hate bias forums.

In 2023 and 2024, the Commission supported the OAG in fulfilling the objective of this grant. Building upon Commissioners' expertise and existing community partnerships, the grant has created additional opportunities to connect law enforcement and community organizations with local community members to talk about hate activity. These 2-day forums also include a day focused on training law enforcement on hate crime trends and investigative best practices. To ensure that all planned grant activities will be completed, the OAG applied for and was granted an extension to use the funding for a fourth year.

Creation of Online Reporting and Resource Portal

The creation of an online reporting form and resource portal is one of the deliverables funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice

⁸ <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/073124.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/091624s.pdf>

Assistance grant. Development of the portal started during the summer of 2023 with the support of the Maryland Department of Information Technology.

An important goal of the portal is to provide resources to Marylanders on combatting hate activity and stay engaged in the hate crime work of the OAG and the Commission. Thus, the portal includes pages describing the Commission's work, an events calendar, definitions of a hate crime and hate bias incident, a list of organizations that may be helpful to a person after experiencing hate, links to reports on hate in Maryland, and a history of OAG activity in addressing hate activity.

The portal is also home to the online reporting form for victims and witnesses of hate activity. The reporting form is a supplemental reporting tool and will not always be sent to law enforcement for investigation and prosecution. The information provided in the form will be used for: tracking hate crimes and hate bias incidents; identifying trends in hate crimes and hate bias incidents; and informing the work of the OAG and the Commission to develop recommendations for improving Maryland's response to hate crimes and hate bias incidents.

Critically, the form is not a replacement for contacting the local police or fire department.

Commissioners assisted OAG in developing the portal and reporting form by reviewing and providing feedback to the form's language and functionality. The reporting form was then manually translated to make it available in the eleven most commonly spoken languages in Maryland based on US Census data. The portal itself can be translated to additional languages using Google Translate.

The portal went live on June 4, 2024, and can be found at nohomeforhate.md.gov.

Hate Crime Hotline and Portal Reports

During 2023, the OAG communicated with 77 individuals who called the hotline between May and December 31st. During 2024, the OAG was in touch with 190 individuals who called the hotline, of which 35 were individuals who contacted the office through the new reporting form on the portal, between January 1st and November 1st.

Not all of these calls were about hate incidents. Some callers were referred to other units like the Consumer Protection Division or the Department of Public Safety and Correctional services (7 in 2023 and 20

in 2024) and others came from people who are located in other states (4 in 2023 and 6 in 2024). When unable to get in touch with individuals, a voicemail is left inviting the person to call back or email the OAG and with advice that reminds callers to contact local law enforcement if they have been a victim of hate.

Individuals reporting to the OAG are not required to disclose where they are located. As such, the information listed here is not representative of all hate in Maryland. It indicates people who have reached out from these counties looking for more information. The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) releases reports every year that provide a more comprehensive view of hate in Maryland, though hate incidents are still vastly underreported. The report for 2023 was released on October 1, 2024.¹⁰

Below, the information the OAG has received since the Commission was established is listed by county. The numbers listed below are not confirmed to be hate incidents and some were directed to other units; they are only representative of the points of contact the OAG has had with members of the public through the hotline and the online portal.

If a county is not listed below, the OAG's reporting mechanisms did not receive any report indicated to be from that county.¹¹

For reports where a location could be indicated, reports were received from the following counties in 2023:

- Allegany County: 1
- Anne Arundel County: 6
- Baltimore City: 9
- Baltimore County: 5
- Calvert County: 1
- Carroll County: 1
- Frederick County: 1
- Harford County: 3
- Howard County: 1
- Montgomery County: 6
- Prince George's County: 3
- Queen Anne's County: 1
- St. Mary's County: 1
- Washington County: 2

¹⁰ <https://mcac.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2023-Hate-Bias-Report.pdf>

¹¹ The Office of the Attorney General is seeking additional ways to aggregate data to reflect which protected classes are being targeted and if the events reported take place in schools.

- Wicomico County: 1
- County Not Mentioned: 31

For reports where a location could be indicated, reports were received from the following counties in 2024 from January 1, 2024, through November 1, 2024:¹²

- Anne Arundel County: 6
- Baltimore City: 13
- Baltimore County: 13
- Calvert County: 3
- Caroline County: 1
- Carroll County: 1
- Charles County: 3
- Dorchester County: 1
- Frederick County: 3
- Harford County: 4
- Howard County: 5
- Kent County: 2
- Montgomery County: 18
- Prince George's County: 12
- Somerset County: 1
- Talbot County: 4
- Washington County: 2
- Wicomico County: 3
- Worcester County: 2
- County Not Mentioned: 87

Official reports from MCAC or other organizations that collect data on hate in Maryland are not yet available for 2024.

Hate Bias Reporting Forums

As part of the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance grant, OAG and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights have partnered to conduct Hate Bias Reporting Forums across the state. Each forum lasts two days and is focused on a specific region. The forums aim to educate law enforcement and the general public about hate crime and hate bias incident activity in the local region. They also serve as an opportunity to

¹² Important note: This number of reports is two more than the number received for 2024 as one person made a report for three locations in the same call.

engage communities about their experiences and needs around combatting hate activity.

Day one of these forums is dedicated to training law enforcement. The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center leads the outreach to local law enforcement agencies to ensure maximum participation. The day includes panels from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC), and local officials to provide information and answer questions about best practices in investigating hate crimes and trends in hate activity in their communities.

Day two is dedicated to the general public and is advertised by MCCR, the OAG, and local partners to encourage attendance. It consists of some of the same presentations on data from MCAC while also having more panels from local schools, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders on hate crime trends and strategies for addressing hate activity. Day two gives OAG and MCCR a chance to hear from the public about their experiences and needs and figure out where there are gaps in reporting that can be improved upon.

Commissioners have played an important role in these forums. Both days have featured presentations from panels as well as participation on a variety of panels. These have included sharing current statistics on hate incidents, presenting on different forms of extremism and recognizing extremist symbolism, and participating on different panels. Commissioners have also been involved behind the scenes in the planning process of these forums to find locations, conduct outreach, and provide support during the forums.

There have been five forums held to date across the State:

- May 10 - 11, 2023 – Western Maryland at Frostburg State University for Garrett, Allegany, Washington and Frederick Counties
- September 18 - 19, 2024 – Central Maryland at Montgomery College for Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties
- January 30 - 31, 2024 – Baltimore City and Baltimore County at Morgan State University
- June 5 - 6, 2024 – Northern Maryland at Harford Community College for Harford, Cecil, and Carroll Counties
- November 15 - 16, 2024 – Southern Maryland at College of Southern Maryland for Saint Mary's, Charles, and Calvert Counties

Three more forums are planned in the coming year to ensure that each county will have a chance to participate. Two will take place on the Eastern Shore and another will focus on Anne Arundel County.

Hosting and Attending Events

The Commission and Commission staff have been active in attending events across the state to raise awareness on how to report hate and sharing the work of the Commission. Beyond the hate bias reporting forums, these events have been instrumental in sharing resources and discussing our efforts to eradicate hate in Maryland.

Working with our grant partners at the Department of Justice, the Commission hosted Reconciling the Past, Building the Future: Law Enforcement and Community Partnerships Against Hate in Maryland with the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission on October 30, 2023. The event took place at the Central Branch of the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore City. It was a day dedicated to the initiatives Maryland has undertaken to address hate incidents of the past and present as well as those the state is taking to prevent future hate. Both commissions have received grant funding from the Department of Justice and are staffed by the OAG.

Human Rights Day is an annual event hosted in Annapolis by the Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies. On February 24, 2024, the Commission was represented on a panel to discuss how incidents of hate have been rising across the state and what could be done to address it on a policy level and the Commission's role in making recommendations. The panel also provided the Commission a contact with the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, a branch that is dedicated to addressing hate through dialogue, mediation, and training.

The Maryland Crime Victims' Rights Conference on April 23, 2024, in Ellicott City also featured a panel with the Commission represented on it. The day was dedicated to bringing people together from across the state to talk about how to best serve victims of crimes. The panel's focus was on the different levels of response at the county, state, and federal level. This gave a chance to place the Commission's work in context of different levels of government as well as sharing how it could be a resource to professionals who assist victims of crime.

The Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity hosted a Hate Has No Place event on May 15, 2024, and invited representation from the Commission to discuss our work. The first panel consisted of local non-profits and the second panel contained government entities, both from the state and county levels, to talk about their initiatives and how to get involved. It was also a chance to answer questions from community members on how to respond to hate incidents.

Shortly thereafter, a panel at the Partners for Justice Conference in Baltimore City on May 22, 2024, hosted a panel of Commissioners to discuss the work of the Commission. The panel was focused on how the Commission works together as a diverse group dedicated to eradicating hate. Everyone on the panel was employed in different areas and came from different backgrounds, showcasing how a diverse, community-based approach is vital to successfully combatting hate.

On November 14, 2024, the Commission was represented on the Governor's Interfaith Council's panel at the Interrupting Violence Together Conference in Columbia. Invited by the Interfaith Council, this was a chance for a commissioner to speak on the work the Commission has done since its formation in 2023 and hand out pamphlets to encourage better reporting.

While additional outreach was conducted by individual Commissioners over the past year, the events highlighted above demonstrate the Commission's focus on engaging the community wherever possible to share resources, answer questions. Despite being a relatively new Commission and facing turnover within the first year, the Commission has prioritized connecting with Marylanders in all corners of the State.

Commission Recommendations

Notwithstanding the legislative mandate to reconstitute the Commission within its first year, Commissioners were able to meet regularly to discuss recommendations and make tangible steps to set future members up for success. As already discussed, this included establishing the committees and operating guidelines for the Commission.

During this time, Commissioners also identified two initial recommendations to enhance the State's hate crimes laws. These recommendations and steps will provide a strong foundation to better address hate incidents and create more robust recommendations in the future.

Clarify the Hate Crimes Statute and Defining Hate Bias Incidents: Maryland Code, Public Safety § 2-307

The Commission's first and most critical recommendation is to clearly define a hate bias incident. Currently, law enforcement agencies in Maryland are required to collect information about hate bias incidents under Maryland Code, Public Safety § 2-307. However, the statute is silent as to what constitutes a hate bias incident, which has led to confusion among both law enforcement agencies and the general public.

In developing a definition of hate bias incident, the Commission looked to other state's definitions. Oregon had the most developed statute under Oregon Revised Statutes 339.347 which included discussions of how hate bias incidents are hostile but do not rise to the level of a prosecutable offense. In an effort to use plainer language, the Commission also looked to the New Jersey Bias-Related Act which used clearer language.¹³ Finally, the Commission looked to the California Department of Justice which included examples for better explanation.¹⁴ By looking to these three places, Commissioners were able to find clear examples of statutory language and saw use in including examples for better understanding. Oregon, New Jersey, and California provided the framework for Commissioners to craft a definition of hate bias incidents for Maryland.

After reviewing several other State and federal definitions, the Commission recommends the following language:

"A hate bias incident is an act of hostility or aggression that: (1) is directed at a person, group of persons, private property, or public property; (2) is motivated in whole or in substantial part by another person's or group's actual or perceived protected class as listed in (2-307(b)(1)); and (3) does not constitute a crime under State or federal law.

A hate bias incident includes but is not limited to: slurs; name-calling; insults; displaying hate material on private property; posting hate material that does not result in property damage; electronic and online distributions of hate material; and distribution of materials with hate messages in a public place."

This addition would provide law enforcement something to rely on when addressing hate bias incidents and ensure officers know what reports are required to be taken. The addition also provides examples to ensure better understanding of hate bias incidents.

Update the Definition of Sexual Orientation: Maryland Criminal Law Code § 10-301

Maryland Criminal Law Code §10-301 sets forth the definitions for the State's hate crimes statutes. While many of the definitions have held up well since original passage, society's understanding of sexual orientation has evolved significantly. Currently, § 10-301(d) defines sexual orientation as

¹³ <https://nj.gov/oag/dcj/obccr/pdfs/biasagree.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://oag.ca.gov/hatecrimes>

meaning “the identification of an individual as to male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality.”

This definition does not encapsulate the present-day understanding of how diversely people experience sexual orientation beyond the three identities recognized here. As a result, the Commission proposes new language to replace the definition in § 10-301(d).

In developing the recommended new language, the Commission looked to other state definitions. In the research of states leading the way on this matter, Colorado uses a broader definition of sexual orientation that will not be subject to how terms are used in the future. By creating a definition in Colorado Revised Statutes 24-34-301 that recognized the actual definition of sexual orientation rather than only listing a limited number of identities, Colorado provided the Commission a framework to create Maryland’s own statute that can continue to be used in the future.

The new proposed language is as follows:

“Sexual orientation means an individual’s identity or another’s perception thereof, in relation to the genders to which the individual is sexually or emotionally attracted to. This includes but is not limited to people who are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual. Sexual orientation is distinct from gender identity as defined under § 20-101(e).”

This change would provide a new definition that would be able to grow with society’s understanding of sexual orientation while also providing examples for people to look to in better understanding the term.

Other Recommendations

Commissioners also developed consensus around a number of other recommendations directed at OAG for enhancing our hate crimes work. For example, Commissioners on the Community Engagement Committee suggested that OAG continue to work on translating our hate crimes materials in different languages so that they are accessible to all Marylanders. This effort is reflected in the OAG portal, which is available in a number of languages via Google translate, and the reporting form which has been manually translated so that it is available in the eleven most commonly spoken languages in Maryland. This has been and will continue to be an important part of our work in ensuring the accessibility of our material across the community.

Another recommendation, initiating in the Community Engagement Committee, is to distribute pamphlets with basic information on hate incidents at local libraries. Given the broad range of individuals that go to a public library, this will provide basic information to Marylanders from all walks of life across the state. OAG has already begun implementing both of these suggestions.

Next Steps

In the coming year, Commissioners will focus on collecting data, performing research, and engaging stakeholders to develop additional policy recommendations for enhancing the State's response to hate activity. Given the reconstitution of the Commission in June of 2024, Commissioners have been using committee meetings to review the work of prior Commissioners and identify areas where additional research and consideration are warranted.

Restorative Justice Committee

The Restorative Justice Committee wants to identify strategies for developing broader community support and other reporting mechanisms beyond law enforcement. When a hate crime or hate bias incident occurs, community support and healing is necessary for individuals and communities to move forward. On top of this, the reporting of hate bias incidents by victims is an ongoing challenge. Currently, hate bias incidents are reported to local law enforcement. However, a hate bias incident does not rise to the level of a crime. Assessing whether law enforcement agencies are the best place for hate bias incidents to be reported or if another organization should handle those reports is a priority of the Restorative Justice Committee.

Addressing Hate in Schools Committee

The Addressing Hate in Schools Committee has noticed that there is a lot of disparity in how hate crimes and hate bias incidents are reported to the police by school administrators. To begin addressing this process, the committee is going to research school policies and ensure that school staff are properly trained on handling these incidents. Additionally, the committee will look into how other public schools across the country handle hate incidents and what their policies are on when to involve local law enforcement.

In an area of overlapping interest, both the schools committee and the Online Cyberbullying committee have recognized the need for

understanding responses to the misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Baltimore County saw this issue last year where a fake was made of a principal saying racist things about students. Looking into how schools and other states handle issues of AI fakes is something both committees want to research moving forward.

Online Cyberbullying Committee

The Online and Cyberbullying Committee has highlighted a few additional areas where better understanding of the current landscape would be needed to make useful policy recommendations. AI continues to be a discussion here. Part of this will be looking at what other states are doing to regulate AI as well as seeing what existing statutes could incorporate AI protections.

Similarly, the committee wants to engage video game players and online streamers to understand what hate and cyberbullying looks like to those active in multi-player video games. Multi-player video games are difficult to moderate, so understanding the landscape in the live interactions is vital to making proper recommendations on policy and raising awareness about these issues.

Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee has highlighted the need to build partnerships and provide resources for local groups. The committee intends to invite individuals from non-profits to speak with the Commissioners about how they handle hate activity and the trends they are seeing in the communities that they serve. This discussion could also assist Commissioners in better identifying how to support these groups and ensure any reports they receive make it to local law enforcement.

Law Enforcement Committee

Similarly, the Law Enforcement Committee wants to look into clarifying the step for reporting and how official reports on hate crimes and incidents are taken. Commissioners identified the need for a thorough understanding of the process so they can identify areas for improvement. Commissioners are also interested in creating a resource list that law enforcement agencies can share with individuals who have been victims of hate to assist victims who need support beyond the legal system.

Beyond research, the committees have also identified the need for coordination and collaboration to fully accomplish their respective missions. Many of the committees have substantial overlap in their missions when it comes to looking at what recommendations would be best in addressing

hate. As the committees begin to meet regularly again, the different committees will connect with each other in the new year to see what issues they can work on together. This will help to ensure work is not needlessly duplicated and allow committees to share ideas.

Finally, the Commission as a whole discussed the need for updated and ongoing training for law enforcement, school resource officers, and other officials involved in administering the State's hate crimes laws. While policy recommendations addressing this issue will be included in a future Commission report, there are some steps that are already being taken to ensure law enforcement has access to proper training on responding to hate incidents.

As part of its U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance grant, OAG will continue to work with the Maryland State Police to develop an online training portal for law enforcement and prosecutors. The portal will focus on the identification, reporting, charging, and prosecution of hate crimes and hate bias incidents as well as their impact on the community.

The training portal will expand upon existing entry-level law enforcement training and help agencies comply with requirements mandating training on reporting. Currently, the portal is in the procurement process. After the procurement process is complete and development has begun, there will be a chance for Commissioners to provide thoughts and feedback to ensure the training is comprehensive.

Conclusion

Consistent with its legislative mandate, the Commission will continue its work of developing strategies to respond to hate incidents in Maryland and make the State safer for all residents. In the new year, the fifteen acting Commissioners will go through the confirmation process with the Senate to become full Commissioners.

Committee meetings will continue to occur on at least a monthly basis. The public is welcome to attend these meetings, and all meeting notices will be placed on the online hate crimes portal. This provides an opportunity for community members' expertise, experiences, and opinions to inform the work of the Commission.

Discussions and recommendations developed by the committees will continue to be raised to the Commission as a whole, allowing the Commission to continue making recommendations to the Maryland

Legislature and the Maryland Department of Education as the landscape of our State continues to evolve.

APPENDIX A: Operating Guidelines

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON HATE CRIMES RESPONSE AND PREVENTION

OPERATING GUIDELINES

I. About the Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention

The Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention was established by legislation, passed by the General Assembly, and signed into law by the Governor during the 2023 session. It is statutorily charged with developing strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity, evaluating State laws and policies relating to hate crimes, and annually reporting to both the General Assembly and the Maryland State Department of Education. The Commission's work focuses on crimes and hate bias incidents that are motivated by and target individuals, groups, or property based on race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or homeless status. The Commission is composed of 23 members, including representatives of 19 named organizations. The Attorney General is the Chair of the Commission.

Mission

The Commission's mission is to eradicate hate crimes and hate bias incidents in Maryland and to support individuals and communities victimized by hate.

Vision

The Commission's vision is for Maryland to be a community united against and free from hate, in all its forms.

Values

The Values that guide the Commission's work are:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Fairness
- Equity
- Diversity

- Empathy
- Professionalism
- Accessible
- Inclusive

Guiding Principles

These Principles guide how we work together on the Commission:

- We seek common ground, even when we disagree, as we share the goal of eradicating hate in Maryland.
- We are open-minded and seek to understand different perspectives, recognizing that there are diverse backgrounds and opinions on the Commission and among Marylanders that may, at times, be in conflict.
- We create an atmosphere of respect and civility within which individual members are free to express their ideas in dialogue, discussion, and debate. We embrace tolerance. We do not direct personal attacks toward any individual(s) or community.
- We collaborate, appreciating the value of bringing to the table and working alongside representatives of diverse nonprofit, private, governmental organizations, and the general public.
- We assume good intent.
- We are prudent in public, recognizing the potential impact of our conduct and behavior on the success of our work together as the Commission.
- We work through our differences and dissenting opinions by focusing on our mission and vision for the Commission and its work.

When attending Commission meetings, the following Ground Rules will apply to our work:

- Be mentally and physically present and focused on the work/agenda at hand;
- Bring genuine intent and assume genuine intent from fellow Commissioners;
- Be curious and ask clarifying questions to test your inferences and assumptions;

- Listen to seek understanding from one another instead of only seeking to respond;
- Make room for everyone to participate and ensure that no one dominates;
- When disagreements arise, focus on tackling the problems and ideas, not the person; and
- Center the work of the Commission, its vision, and mission whenever differences arise.

II. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission

The Commission will:

1. Develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crimes and hate bias incidents in Maryland.
2. Evaluate State laws and policies relating to hate crimes and hate bias incidents - including their effectiveness, recommend improvements, and support change.
3. Make recommendations to improve participation by law enforcement in reporting hate crimes and hate bias incidents.
4. Engage the entire community, including individuals and groups that typically are not the targets of hate in our work.
5. Consider the unique challenges presented by how social media and gaming are used to spread hate.
6. Promote healing within communities through the use of restorative justice and other methods.
7. Support teachers, parents, caregivers, and students to address hate in schools.
8. Provide annual policy recommendations to the Maryland State Department of Education ("MSDE") with the goal of reducing the incidence of hate crimes and hate bias incidents in schools.
9. Provide annual policy recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly.
10. Operate with transparency. Meetings will be open to the public as required under Maryland's Open Meetings Act.

11. Not tolerate acts that constitute discrimination or harassment based on race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or by any other factor protected by federal or state law.

III. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission Chair.

The Chair, or in his absence the Chair-designee, is responsible for leading and directing the work of the Commission. The Chair will:

1. Establish the agendas for and preside at meetings of the Commission.
2. Appoint subcommittees as needed, from time to time, to study specific matters of interest and prepare recommendations for the full Commission.
3. Review and approve final reports of the Commission prior to submission to MSDE or the General Assembly.
4. Assure that the Commission and Commissioners are operating in accordance with these operating guidelines and applicable law.
5. Assure that Commission meetings are conducted consistent with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

IV. The Roles and Responsibilities of Individual Commissioners

Individual Commissioners will:

1. Uphold the Mission, Vision, Values, Guiding Principles, and Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission.
2. Recognize that they serve as “public officials” and have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the Commission, the OAG, and the State, as defined under by Maryland’s Public Ethics Law, including avoiding conflicts of interest and preserving confidentiality.
3. Adhere to the highest standards of personal conduct and exercise a reasonable degree of judgment. Personal behavior must not compromise a commissioner’s capacity to perform their public role in an unbiased manner or create an appearance to that effect.
4. Attend and participate in meetings of the Commission.

5. Participate in at least one of the Commission's subcommittees.
6. Direct media inquiries about the Commission and its activities to the Commission Chair or OAG staff. Commissioners should refrain from public comment about Commission work unless otherwise authorized.
7. Maintain records in their custody, including emails and texts, which relate to the Commission in accordance with the OAG's Record Retention Policy and the requirements of Maryland's Public Information Act.

V. Additional Guidance on Public Communications by Commission Members in their Private Lives

The Commission and the OAG recognize and support the rights of Commission members as private citizens to engage in free speech on matters of public concern to the full extent recognized and protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. However, these rights must be balanced with the duties and responsibilities Commissioners take on as described above. To assist Commissioners in navigating this balancing act, the Commission is providing the following guidelines and tools.

Standards of Public Communications, including Social Media

- A Commission member should not express or imply that they are communicating on behalf of the Commission unless specifically authorized to do so.
- Where necessary, when communicating publicly, a Commission member should clarify that the views expressed are their own and do not reflect the views of the Commission or the OAG.
- A Commission member should not make any statement that is likely to incite imminent lawless action, constitutes a criminal threat, or expressly encourages others to engage in hate crimes, hate bias incidents, or violence.
- A Commission member should not make any statement that a reasonable person would likely consider to be hate speech, including false statements or statements in reckless disregard for the truth, or statements that otherwise are likely to damage the reputation of, impair the public trust in, or hinder the work of the Commission.

- A Commission member should be professional when speaking and interacting with other members of the Commission and the public.
- A Commission member should not make comments that a reasonable person would likely perceive as showing prejudice based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any other protected basis.
- A Commission member should hold themselves to the same standards online as they do in person.
- A Commission member should not engage in anonymous online activity (or use a pseudonym) to engage in conduct or communications that they would otherwise not be permitted to engage in if their identities were known.

VI. Resources to support your participation as a Commissioner

[About Maryland's Open Meetings Act](#)

[About the Maryland Public Ethics Law](#)

[About Maryland's Public Information Act](#)

[About the OAG Record Retention Policy](#)

APPENDIX B: Previously Identified Priorities

Chair

Anthony G. Brown
Attorney General of Maryland

Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention

Chair Designee

Zenita Hurley, Esq.

Staff

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September 17, 2024

Prior Commission Committee Work

OVERVIEW: Below you will find a summary of the priorities for future exploration and policy development from the prior Commission. These findings are grouped by Committee, with a section each for (1) Law Enforcement; (2) Community Engagement; (3) Restorative Justice; (4) Schools; and (5) Online/Cyberbullying.

As you will see, there is overlap across recommendations, with nearly every Committee raising the need for more targeted and more consistent trainings, stronger reporting – both to and by law enforcement agencies –, and resource support with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding about hate crimes and hate bias incidents across Maryland.

We share these as a resource for the Commission and its Committees to build upon as it continues its mission to eradicate hate crimes and hate bias incidents in Maryland and to support individuals and communities victimized by hate.

Law Enforcement

1. **Training:** prior Forums have raised the need for consistency across trainings for law enforcement agencies on hate crimes and hate bias incidents.
 - a) Questions remain about (1) the best curriculum and (2) its deployment to ensure effective uptake across the state as well as consistency in implementation.
 - b) Efforts to “train the trainers,” i.e. training law enforcement agents to train others within their respective agencies and departments,

have been discussed as a method of increasing long-term sustainability and successful uptake of any developed curriculums.

- c) Note: Maryland State Police are working on a training portal under OAG's Department of Justice grant that may address some of these issues.
-
- 2. **Resources for Agencies:** There is a need to develop a mechanism for sharing recommended policies and best practices for smaller law enforcement agencies that don't have the resources to develop these on their own.
 - 3. **Resources for Victims:** There is a need to identify existing resources that can be shared with victims of hate crimes and hate bias incidents to provide longer-term support and wrap-around services where feasible.
 - a) Notes from prior Commissioners:
 - i. Montgomery County had a faith community response team with formal training, borrowing the model from Fairfax County, VA.
 - 4. **Data Collection:** How do we share the information and data collected from the hotline and portal, such as trends or regional data, especially with communities that are often targets of hate crimes and hate bias incidents? How can we use this data to develop more targeted strategies to address how hate crimes and hate bias incidents manifest in different communities, i.e. identifying and addressing specific risk and protective factors with more tailored recommendations?
 - 5. **Diverse Hiring:** There is a need for increased diversity among law enforcement agency personnel, which should improve agencies' engagement and competency of the diverse communities that they serve.

1. **Reporting:** There is a need to encourage people to report not only hate crimes, but also hate bias incidents to law enforcement – especially in communities with less trust in law enforcement. Ideas raised by prior Commissioners to achieve this priority included:
 - a. Making pamphlets available at local libraries
 - b. Ensuring informational materials are accessible in different languages
 - c. Including information about how to report hate crimes and hate bias incidents in newsletters
 - d. Connecting the Community Engagement and Law Enforcement Committees
 - e. Exploring partnering with Law Enforcement’s National Night Out
 - f. Mainstreaming hate crime info into community building efforts with police
2. **Resources for Community Organizations:** Efforts could be made to support and engage trusted community organizations so they can build the internal capacity and knowledge-base to help Marylanders find the resources they need and to report hate crimes and hate bias incidents. Suggested methods from prior Commissioners included:
 - a. Outreach to trusted community organizations
 - b. Meet and greets
 - c. Sharing informational materials

Restorative Justice

1. **Listening Sessions:** Prior Commissioners suggested exploring the capacity for the Commission to host either in person or virtual listening sessions for members of the community to share their stories and experiences. Prior Commissioners noted that while virtual sessions may increase attendance numbers, in-person sessions will likely make people feel more comfortable sharing (e.g. members of immigrant communities may feel less comfortable online because they could be tracked more easily) and help build a stronger sense of community and

provide an additional resources for the Commission in understanding how hate activity occurs in the State.

2. **Reporting:** Prior Commissioners raised concerns around the barriers to reporting a hate crime or hate bias incident to law enforcement and wanted to explore how to reduce them. They also suggested exploring what community-based reporting might practically look like if it were expanded beyond law enforcement.
3. **Training:** Prior Commissioners wanted to explore and identify trainings and resources on restorative justice and community-based responses to hate activity for sharing across Maryland.

Schools

1. **Reporting:** Prior Commissioners raised numerous issues for further exploration related to reporting in schools, including:
 - a. The lack of data and consistency in reporting among Law Enforcement Agencies, especially Pre-COVID, which has made identifying trends or issues difficult beyond individual cases
 - b. Anonymous reporting systems in schools
 - c. Exploring the MCSS-run statewide reporting system for hate crimes and hate bias incidents and other safety concerns (Safe Schools Maryland)
2. **Training:** Prior Commissioners suggested that it might be worthwhile to assess current training capacity for School Resource Officers and to look to local school systems for best practices in educating students on hate crimes and hate bias incidents. More information on both suggestions is below:
 - a. Currently MSCC leads training efforts for the 400 School Resource Officers across Maryland (just under 300 public schools currently have an assigned SRO), prior Commissioners suggested that the Public Justice Center in Baltimore may be able to help assess current capacity and in exploring other training needs and gaps

that need to be filled by other professionals such as those with expertise in therapy and/or mental health

- b. Prior Commissioners suggested reaching out to Montgomery Public Schools to learn more about their approach and existing resources for students, including their app Stronger Student Mental Health and Wellness App, with the aim of developing and disseminating best practices for other school systems

3. **Public Awareness Campaign:** Prior Commissioners raised several efforts that could be addressed at the state level, including:

- a. A statewide positive re-enforcement campaign to increase awareness and understanding about hate crimes and hate bias incidents and encourage reporting
- b. Engaging the Maryland State Department of Education by having them attend Committee meetings, with suggestions for information sharing and including them in the development and creation of policy and program recommendations, especially regarding feasibility and resources for implementation

4. **Resources for Teachers, Students, and Families:** Prior Commissioners suggested it would be worthwhile to explore resources that could be provided to students, families, teachers, and staff, including:

- a. Exploring how to engage families who speak English as a second language and the resources needed to support them as they navigate the education system and/or face hate
- b. Exploring the resources that may be needed to support families as students become young adults and begin navigating their education with less parental oversight
- c. Exploring the gaps in knowledge and resources needed to educate teachers and staff on engaging with students and families from a diverse backgrounds

Online/Cyberbullying

1. **Enhancing Statutory and Other Protections:** Prior commissioners raised a number of issues for further policy exploration at the state level including:
 - a. Addressing doxxing¹⁵
 - b. Developing requirements or accountability measures addressing online hate activity for organizations that receive state funds
 - c. Addressing Nonconsensual/revenge porn (Note that the General Assembly took action on this issue in 2024 with [SB391](#), which was signed into law by Governor Moore, future efforts by the Commission may seek to build on these existing efforts)
 - d. Exploring and recommending policies that social media companies can take to discourage hate on their platforms
2. **Education:** Prior commissioners suggested two policy areas to explore related to education:
 - a. Partnering with schools, particularly private or charter schools, to help ensure implementation of existing policies designed to protect students from online hate, harassment, and cyberbullying
 - b. Promoting education at every level teaches end-users how to use the internet safely as well as how and where to report online hate
3. **Role of Artificial Intelligence and Online Gaming:** Prior Commissioners raised the following issues for consideration as the work of the Commission and technology evolves:
 - a. The use of AI in online hate and harassment (e.g. deepfakes such as the incident with the Baltimore-area high school principal)
 - b. The use of fake or anonymous accounts to engage in hateful rhetoric
 - c. Assessing how hate presents in online gaming and its impacts

¹⁵ Doxxing is the act of publicly providing personally identifiable information about an individual or organization, usually via the Internet and without their consent, and typically for the purpose of harassment, exposure, financial harm, or other punishment.