Aisha Braveboy Urges Maryland Legislature to Strengthen the Hate Crime Statute

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Upper Marlboro, MD – February 11, 2020 - Prince George’s County State’s Attorney Aisha Braveboy was joined by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Collins, II, other elected officials, advocates and supporters at a press conference today to discuss House Bill 917 (HB917) and Senate Bill 606 (SB606), “Criminal Law – Hate Crimes Basis – 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III’s Law.” The legislation in the House Chamber, HB917, was crossed filed with SB606 in the Senate Chamber. House Bill 917 and SB606 will strengthen the hate crime statute, clarifying that hate does not have to be the sole motivation for a hate crime.

“Now more than ever we need strong hate crime laws to ensure that crimes of hate will not be tolerated in our state and to ensure the punishment for targeting individuals or institutions for violence or vandalism for no other reason than their religious affiliation, skin color or other personal characteristic is appropriate,” said State’s Attorney Braveboy.

According to the Maryland Department of Legislative Services, as of 2019, there are 21 radical groups that spew hate in Maryland, an increase from 2017. Among them are Neo-Nazis and white nationalists and groups whose members are anti-Muslim or exist to deny the Holocaust.

Currently, Maryland’s hate crime statute is ambiguous and requires prosecutors to prove that hate or bias is the sole motivating factor for a crime.

“Requiring prosecutors to prove that hate or bias is the only motive for a crime is an extremely high standard that gives hate crime offenders an easy defense. This law has to change and the time is now. Maryland Legislators must pass SB606 and HB917, the Second Lieutenant Richard Collins, III law,” Braveboy said.

Senate Bill 606 was heard in the Senate Committee, Judicial Proceedings, today at 12 p.m. The Judiciary Committee of the House Chamber hearing on HB 917 was at 1 p.m..

Advocates and supporters came out in support of both bills.